

DOCTORAL THESIS

Theatre – ting

Toward a Materialist Practice of Staging Documents

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Theatre – ting
Toward a Materialist Practice of Staging Documents

by
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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of PhD**

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Abstract

This Practice-as-Research project investigates documentary performance from the perspective of the dramaturg. Through analysing two specific practical approaches to working with documentary material; one with non trained performers related to methods of socially engaged and participatory art practices, and the other with professionally trained performers, I argue for moving away from the perceived dichotomy between the discourse of reality and fiction in documentary work entirely. Introducing object-oriented philosophy and new materialism as an ethical framework, I propose a third way of framing work that use testimonial, tribunal or other materials derived from contemporary lives, arguing that a document is neither real nor fictional – it is a thing. I have explored practical ways for performers and dramaturgs to work with *text-things*, and a conceptual framework for the theatrical event called *theatre-ting*. The etymological root of the word ‘ting’ (thing) connects to practices of assemblage and gathering, still found in the Nordic languages. The theatre-ting brings the factual into the spaces of the fictional, which destabilizes both demonstrating how they are equally theatrical, truthful and mystical. It is a space where common questions and issues can be staged and discussed. It is an arena for testing, rehearsing, and practicing ethics. The materialist practice of staging documents questions notions of authorship, subjectivity, relation, and control in performative practices. In dialogue with object-oriented philosophy I have developed a conceptual framework to work from, challenging anthropocentrism and pointing to the ways things (including human bodies) are co-dependent and form each other, and where neither have the power of definition over the other. This demands ways of dealing with listening, time, relation, chance, and uncertainty. It is a matter of moving the attention to a materialist rather than individualist view.

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Acknowledgements

To do a research project based on dramaturgical practice has been a process of finding my place in the performing arts business. I entered into the European avant-garde scene in the 1990s via my education at École Jacques Lecoq in Paris and Theatre Science at the University of Oslo. I performed with many independent companies in Oslo and Norway before getting caught up with curating, producing and writing about interdisciplinary performance. Entering into academia happened with my MA in performance studies at New York University. I left New York energized, and with a lot of new material to offer my local environment in Norway. At the time, the place that was most receptive to this academic discourse was the independent dance scene. As I had left the field of performing myself in 1998, I strove to find a new identity as a curator and scholar. My engagement with contemporary dance became a place where I could work with performing arts but avoid the fictional space of the theatre, and where I could find ways of treating a notion of the real through the body in performance. The dance scene in Norway in early 2000 was thriving, questioning, and breaking its own barriers, opening up to the international theoretical discourse on dance. It was during this time that I started to work as a dramaturg for choreographers. My encounter with the work of a dramaturg was thus based on my knowledge of movement, rhythm, and composition that I had learned from Jacques Lecoq, which has developed into dramaturgical practice in theatre and the interdisciplinary performance field.

I entered back into theatre through my engagement as artistic director of the acting program at the Norwegian Theatre Academy at Østfold University College. The acting and scenography education at NTA is interdisciplinary and stands firmly in an avant-garde tradition. My ongoing relationship with NTA has been extremely informative, interesting, and inspiring. I am forever grateful for the opportunity I was given to lead the acting

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This research is an ongoing process, a dialogue of transformative powers, things in becoming – coming and going. Is it really me, the researcher, who decides the shapes of these movements? Or am I as much directed by the things I encounter, as I tend to shape them through the ways in which I create and reinvent them? The journey through this research has offered me a place in my professional career where I finally feel at home. I began with the intent of writing a purely academic PhD but quickly realised how I was drawn into practical work in rehearsal spaces and thus transferred to doing a PaR project. I have realised that I am a dramaturg, an artist, and a scholar. I am grateful for having been given the opportunity to find my place.

I have depended on my home support for interrupting my line of thoughts, for giving me joy and energy to contextualise what I am doing, and for offering constant reality checks and helping me find my orientation. Thank you Viktor, Theo and Per Gunnar.

Introduction

This thesis forms a part of the PhD project *Theatre-ting, Toward a Materialist Practice of Staging Documents*, which is based around a practice-as-research methodology exploring dramaturgy and documentary performance. The documents I have worked with grow out of a process of dealing with the topics of child abuse and loss. The first topic has been dealt with in two performative projects: *WOE*, directed and written by Edit Kaldor and premiering in Leuven, Belgium (19th March 2013), and *Childism*, created by Petra Fransson, Henriette Slorer and myself with its first presentation in Fredrikstad, Norway (14th November 2015). The second topic was dealt with in *Encountering Loss*, a collaboration between Toril Solvang, the National Theatre in Oslo, myself and seven young people aged 16-21. The project had three public presentations: 23rd February 2013, 17th August 2013, and 22nd February 2014. The project *Childism* is submitted as part of this PhD alongside the thesis. Both are considered to be equally inter-related parts of a whole. *Childism* is the latest performative work under the scope of this research, and it is the live project that most distinctively demonstrates the outcomes of the research. It reflects the processes and experiences both from *WOE* and *Encountering Loss*.

I was invited to take part in the creation of the performance *WOE* as an assistant dramaturg to Kaldor. We shared similar interests and questions in relation to working with documentary theatre, mainly connected to what theatre can offer documents as an arena that gathers people, and how to engage audiences in conversations and reflections on a chosen topic. The process opened up for new perspectives and areas to explore further as part of my own research. Central issues explored in *Encountering Loss* were: the collective processes of creation, challenging notions of artistic control letting the collaborators steer more of the process and the live presentations, and further investigations into how to perform documentary material and what can be considered documentary as such. In

Childism, the last of the three projects, I wanted to return to the topic of child abuse that was dealt with in *WOE*. I wanted to explore other ways of dealing with testimonies where the informant was more closely involved in the process. In this project we investigated further how to speak someone else's words through focussing on breath, listening and rhythm, how to introduce dance and movement as a way to relate to documentary material, the relation to objects and what things express in and of themselves, and if and how we could speak explicitly of abuse on stage.

In dialogue with the practice related to developing these live performance projects, this part of the research has taken the form of an encyclopaedia. In this way, it follows an alphabetical order. This particular encyclopaedia has entries on central subject matters, and is a reference work for the research that has been undertaken. However, the encyclopaedia performs its role as a document interdependently with and in close relation to the live presentations. The encyclopaedia is in fact a performance of its own, which has shaped the live presentations as much as they have shaped the encyclopaedia. This research project explores dramaturgical practice in documentary theatre and performance as a materialist practice. As will become clear, the meaning of 'thing' derived from its etymological root connected to practices of assemblage and gathering is central to this project. The research connects with object-oriented philosophy, which considers all things as having equal power to create and transform whilst also being dependent on connections with other things for their coming into being. Any thing, for instance an encyclopaedia, is an assemblage constituted through its relations to other things. Consequently, I see this thesis as a thing formed and constructed in relation to experiences of reading, watching, doing, performing, discussing, listening, feeling, talking, reflecting, encountering, collaborating, writing, drawing, touching, tasting, staying silent, staying with, and enduring.

As a consequence of the ways the performing arts have been developing in the West in particular since the 1960s, the position and labour of the dramaturg has been destabilized, questioned, and debated (Sánchez, 2011; Lehman & Primavesi, 2009; Van Kerkhoven, 2009; Turner & Behrndt, 2008). Since the 1990s, it has become common for choreographers to engage dramaturgs, which has also influenced the practice of dramaturgy in the theatre where their role is no longer as strongly connected only to dramatic text. The work of the dramaturg seems to have evolved in similar directions to that of the curator in visual arts. That is, towards the role of producer, including programming performances for festivals and theatres, as much as developing concepts with other artists and instigating collaborations between artists. In this situation where the dramaturgical role is taken up in new arenas and structures of working, this practice-as-research project aspires to contribute a conceptual framework and practical approaches to ways of relating to and presenting documentary material in performance.

Because my initial concern is of an ethical nature, it has been important to explore a philosophical approach that affects the ways in which we deal with people's stories and experiences in the theatre. There seems to be a need for new methods, in addition to what is offered through the most common acting methodology — one dominated by an analytic, mimetic, and interpretative approach to acting and dramaturgy. Such traditions in Western theatre are inadequate in the quest to represent a lived reality in the current mediatized and connective mode of global communication. I have been searching for a vocabulary that may be useful in this kind of work, that may contribute to changing the ways in which we think, relate, work, and act with documentary material. The development of documentary theatre follows an avant-garde trajectory and development of experimentation in the theatrical arts. Throughout the 20th century Western dance, theatre and performance have been searching for ways to present the 'real' experimenting with the perceived dichotomy

between reality and fiction. This is a tension that lies implicit in the art form, which has challenged our conceptions of what the skills of an actor or a dancer consist of, and what parameters we use for judging quality. The search for ways to actualise the ‘real’ in the moments of performance also questions the relationship between performer and audiences, especially concerning ideas of theatre as a space for mimicry and make-believe. There has been a breaking down of established acting and production methods, which has led to a certain kind of de-skilling developing into a new method where failure has become a performing strategy. It has also led to various other ways of performing documents, represented for instance by what is labelled verbatim theatre, testimonial theatre, and other forms of documentary performance using interviews, confessions and stories from living people as the basis for theatrical text—more or less edited and turned into different forms of narratives. This research project reflects and draws on many aspects of these various developments.

I set out to do two things during the scope of this research: to explore practically ways of staging documentary material, and to find a conceptual framework and vocabulary to articulate an ethical practice of staging documentary material. The first aspect has taken place through the mentioned three performative projects, and the second aspect is explored in the sections of this thesis where central concepts and themes are discussed. These two parts of the research are completely interlinked. The creation of live performances and the writing of a thesis affect and shape each other through a dialogue across practices in a rehearsal space with other people and the practice alone in a study room. The theoretical and philosophical material with which this research as a whole stands in further dialogue will be introduced briefly below, as an entry point to understanding the philosophical grounding, which all the entries in the encyclopaedia reflect. Further, in certain entries, the encyclopaedia investigates the philosophical concepts more thoroughly. In other entries

central topics such as ‘dramaturgy’ and ‘document’ are researched, and in yet other entries the experiences from workshops and rehearsals are investigated.

Listening to memory

Working with stories and testimonies from living people implies working with memory as a document. An event is perceived on many levels simultaneously – it is a sensorial experience involving physical, emotional, spiritual and reflexive capacities. The documents, which are later used as material in performance, are formed as a concentrate of these impressions. The document could be understood as a distilled version of the experienced event. If memory, retold and usually recorded, is the document, this implies that the memory is a constructed and edited image. One central question is whether we can treat this document as truth, which is also a highly relevant legal issue. This point of departure in relating to documentary material in performance has led my research to question the perceived dichotomies between fact and fiction and truth and falsehood, and ultimately to explore perceptions of reality. Memory is a narrative or an image that has its own agency, capable of creating other realities, and can attach to and detach from the original event as much as other events. I believe memory to be living matter that always performs parts of its past as much as it shapes visions of futures in the present moment when ‘presenced’ through speech. Memory is neither true nor false, and it is neither fact nor fiction. Memories are documents, and documents are things that move and transform in active relations with their surroundings, animate and inanimate, constantly being shaped and reshaped. Our memories form us as much as we give form to our memories.

Trauma theory draws our attention to what is lost from memory, i.e. the traces (physical, emotional, and spiritual) that are left out from verbal articulation, and not even raised to consciousness but remain as sensations and emotional reactions triggered by various

sensorial stimulations. Traumatic experiences are claimed to exist beyond language (Caruth 1996, Pollock 2009, Ettinger 1999 and 2007), not possible to articulate verbally. Agamben supports this in his writings on testimony, witnessing and the archive where he argues that reality or truth exceeds its factual representations (1999: 12). The need to listen to and spend time with documents in order to possibly 'presence' some of the withdrawn realities that the document echoes and relates to is advocated by trauma theory and also the practice of this research project. In order to hear and sense the withdrawn aspects of things, we need pauses, silence, stillness, and patience. This, Agamben argues, is the point of contact between a part and the whole. Silvia Benso writes about our relation to things and emphasises how we need to approach and touch things with patience and tenderness in order to open up for the metaphysical in things (Benso 2000).

Object-oriented philosophy

Through various sources of inspiration, occasions of serendipity, and encounters with things (mainly books and people) my attention has been pointed and drawn to object-oriented philosophy. In rehearsal I have experimented with concepts and vocabulary drawn from the recent developments in what has been labelled object-oriented ontology (OOO), speculative realism, and new materialism. Key thinkers to whom I refer are Jane Bennett, Silvia Benso, Rosi Braidotti, Tristan Garcia, Graham Harman, and Timothy Morton. Another important forerunner to this thinking whose work I reference is Martin Heidegger. This strand of philosophy is still emerging, and the various approaches to thinking around our relationship to matter and realism are far from convergent. For instance, object-oriented *philosophy* is a term coined by Harman, while Levi Bryant is claimed to have coined object-oriented *ontology*. The slippery ground of this field of philosophy is precisely why it is interesting to engage with it from the perspective of dramaturgy. It correlates with the slippery ground of the role of the contemporary dramaturg, and her

more or less undefined labour within a rehearsal process. Neither object-oriented philosophy nor dramaturgy has any clearly defined definitions or frameworks yet. They are both fields under construction so to speak, under development and discussion.

Object-oriented philosophy offers ways to think of, deal with, and relate to documentary material, which in this case has been the testimonies, stories and images of an informant who suffered severe child abuse, as well as conversations, reflections, writings and actions of three young performers in *WOE*, an actor and a dancer in *Childism*, and a group of young people in *Encountering Loss*. The work has developed out of their sharing of dreams, political concerns, opinions, imaginings (both physical and verbal), memories, and relations. What I propose here is to think, speak of, and act with these kinds of material as *things*. This approach has a set of consequences for the collaborative work, both in terms of the dramaturgical composition of a performance and in terms of questions of authorship when it comes to the artists as well as the one who testifies or produces the original material or document. It also affects modes of performing and ways of staging and being with the documentary material in a space with an audience. The ambition is to create a materialist practice of staging documents that overcomes the presumed dichotomy between documentary theatre understood as real and fictional theatre understood as ‘unreal’, pointing toward new ways of perceiving both document and fiction that may give performing spaces renewed agency as arenas for public dialogue. While the methodological approach I propose has some clear concepts to deal with, the outcomes of using those concepts are never stable or defined. Thus my use of the mentioned philosophy does not take a clear position in relation to the various fractions and factions that make up contemporary object-oriented or materialist thinking. The goal is, rather, to move into relation with central ideas for further exploration of how to practically create, perform, and think inside what I call a materialist practice of staging documents. The practice does not

illustrate or use philosophy as its own critical framework. However, it samples, listens to, and dialogues with philosophical concepts and frameworks of thinking – inclinations and approaches inherent in the philosophical body. It is a mode of co-affection and transmission in which origins are lost. Without attempting to perform philosophy, I hope to contribute to the field of dramaturgy, acting methodology and performance theory.

Object-oriented ontology (OOO)

What has appealed to me in object-oriented philosophy connects to the critique of anthropocentrism, questioning our understanding of objects and our relationship to things. Here I follow Harman, Morton and several others' understanding of an object, which includes everything from an artefact, to natural phenomena, a thought, a concept, and sentient and non-sentient beings. All matters can be understood as either object or thing. I prefer to speak of matter as things in this context rather than objects, referring back to Heidegger's notion of the difference between them: an object is something defined by language and thus closed and definite in our perception of it. A *thing*, on the other hand, is something only partly known to us, thus more open-ended, less fixed, and more in flux. Further, much of Heideggerian thinking is interested in the nearing function of things, how they gather aspects of that which is withdrawn and revealed in the world. Object-oriented philosophy is concerned with things, or objects, being separate entities. Although they stand in relation to each other they will always be partly withdrawn from each other. We see things from different viewpoints. We can argue about which image of the real is more truthful, or we can accept that we will never be able to grasp the complete picture of anything. Object-oriented ontology (OOO) moves on to discuss the ways things are connected whilst simultaneously separate and autonomous. There needs to be a certain distance in order for there to be a relation; it is possible that things can be separate but still affect each other, which is a known realisation from quantum theory. It is precisely in the

space that separates where connections happen. Thinking of how things are connected is a matter of inter-dependence and co-creation.

Good news for documentary theatre is how Timothy Morton writes about the mystery in realism (2013). His concept of mystery is linked to the idea of the withdrawn side of objects and things. He equals the withdrawal of things with the unspeakable quality of them as a secret they carry. Claiming that real things carry magic and mystery questions the idea of realism as a concept of truth, and the conceit that there are real things at all. The point is that the perceived dichotomy between real and non-real (fiction or mystery) collapses within object-oriented ontology. Morton writes about the traces and footprints that things leave, which he argues belong to aesthetics. Trauma theory (Caruth 1996, Ettinger 2007) speaks of the inaccessible traces of trauma as things. Morton's position, however, challenges trauma theory to articulate the relationship between an experience in the past, memory and the traces left in the psychophysical body, and how they can be understood in terms of the real.

New materialism

New materialism is a branch of object-oriented philosophy that is less concerned with the ontology of objects and how they relate to each other, but more with how a materialist view of the world affects subject formations, our relationships to our environment, and human activity. To a large degree, this strand of thinkers builds on feminist theory in their focus on the body as materiality, where the sensorial capacities are central reference points in the perception of reality. The interest of philosophers such as Jane Bennett and Rosi Braidotti lies in exploring what we perceive as life. What is life? In her book (2010) Bennett questions the presumed passivity of matter and argues for 'the capacity to feel force before [or without] subjective emotion' (xiii), which juxtapose humans and things.

She is concerned with a more sustainable conduct of living when seeing what she calls thing-power in all things, including the human body. Following Deleuze and Guattari, a thing for Bennett is an assemblage of many things; that is for her how all things are connected in what she calls ‘an open-ended collective’ (24). Like Bennett, Rosi Braidotti is interested in moving beyond the life – matter binary. Through her ‘nomadic theory’ she questions how we can deal with transformation as a natural and creative part of life, which includes enduring pain and transforming the body in death (2011). Braidotti is concerned with the ways in which life moves through us, thus the body is not, as she puts it, ‘mine’. Life is something that passes through matter; thereby, she questions the notion of the ‘I’ and if life is something that belongs to us as individuals (2010:210).

In this research memories and testimonies, often of traumatic experiences, are understood as things. These matters, however, are closely linked to personal imaginings directed by strong emotions such as desire, repulsion, hate, shame and fear, as well as bodily sensations of pain, control, and subjugation. Questioning if the body belongs to us is highly problematic for people who are victims of abuse. It risks giving the perpetrator the right to control and use someone else’s body, arguing that the victim should simply endure the pain. However, this is a simplification. It is important to remember the way object-oriented philosophy emphasizes the ways things are co-dependent, entangled and emerge only in relation to other things. It means that if one thing (a body) is altered, so are all other things with which it stands in relation. Buddhist philosophy, which this research also relates to, claims that separation between things is an illusion; all sentient and non-sentient beings are part of the same origin. Thus, Buddhists say that hurting another body is to hurt your own. A materialist practice of staging documents departs from an understanding that how something is treated has consequences for everything else that is part of a specific process of creation. How I act with things will eventually have consequences for my own

existence—in the present and into the future. New materialism avoids dualism and question power relations between humans and things:

In sum, new materialists are rediscovering a materiality that materializes, evincing immanent modes of self-transformation that compel us to think of causation in far more complex terms; to recognize that phenomena are caught in a multitude of interlocking systems and forces and to consider anew the location and nature of capacities for agency.

(Coole & Frost 2010: 9)

Text-things in the Theatre-ting

The two main concepts, which I will introduce are what I call *text-things* and the *theatre-ting*. Most of the material used in the three projects that form part of this practice-as-research stem from the memories of different living people and are images and objects referring to incidents in the past, thus perceived as documentary material. This material is transformed into performance texts spoken or moved. I don't see these text-things as separate or completely different from written drama, which is commonly perceived as fictional. Both kinds of texts are things performing memory, history, fantasy, imagination, etc. However, my main focus in this thesis is on documentary material, which I refer to as *text-things* including choreographic text. I am exploring what implications this conceptual framing has on the practical work in the rehearsal space, both for me as the dramaturg and for the performers speaking or moving the text-things with an audience present. Relating to text-things implies listening with your entire being and physical sensorial apparatus. This requires spending time, working at not identifying or interpreting the text-things but relating to them as agents with their own capacities of transformation, formation and creating worlds and realities. This of course takes place in relation to the speaking body.

However, the performer needs to question her power to create and frame what a thing is, and be open to transform herself through the encounter with the text-things.

The other main concept at work in this context is the proposal to frame the live presentations of documentary material as a *theatre-ting*. This represents a merging of the fictional space of theatre with the function of official arenas such as the courtroom, the parliament or a lecture space. It refers to the old Nordic, Celtic, and Germanic word *ting* (thing in English), which originally meant ‘great assembly’ and was the place where political and social concerns were discussed and settled. The theatre-ting brings the factual into the spaces of the fictional, which questions and destabilizes both, moving toward a collapse of the dichotomy between them and demonstrating that both are equally truthful and mystical (Morton, 2013). Art can offer a space for reflective dialogue that allows aspects of fiction, fantasy, poetry, and embodied reflection in relation to what is considered to be facts and proofs. Performers can take what is difficult to verbally express in other public arenas into their bodies and give it a structure for others to be able to relate to it through affect. Theatre, dance, and performance can fill in some of the spaces of reality that fall outside the presumed facts. The theatre-ting can question what the public space is able to hold through challenging its ethical borders. By doing so it can reveal the dangers of any autonomous space, be it private or public, advocating the ways they reciprocally shape and transform each other.

Part of the point of the theatre-ting is that the ‘documentarist’ cannot hide. He or she is the one who presents the material and has to reveal his or her process of relating to the topic and the material. Her presence is important, embodying a certain viewpoint, feelings and reflections in relation to the material. It is precisely the relation between the material, the ‘documentarist’, the collaborators, and the audience that is the focus of the theatre-ting.

Any encounter with a document or an artwork claiming to be ‘documentary’ implies a set of beliefs—for instance, that a document is a proof representing a reliable account of an event in the past. What we tend to forget is that no document can ever fully represent an event; even a comprehensive collection of documents stemming from the same event can not give a reliable phenomenological understanding of what took place in all its complexity. There will always be gaps, silences and empty spaces that cannot be filled. All documentary things thus have ‘a communicative life that in part escapes the intentions of the filmmaker(s) [documentarist]’ (Plantinga 2013: 58). I propose that the theatre-ting questions our relationship to memory, history, and how the past is experienced and represented in the present because at best it escapes the perceived dichotomy between reality and fiction, the true and the false, acknowledging the impossibility of representing reality as such. Can we avoid putting forward ideas of ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ related to issues of ‘truth’ and ‘honesty’? The attempt is to present the complexity of a reality that is larger than what we can grasp. One way to do this is to avoid ‘naturalism,’ or at least to mix genres: naturalism with poetry, choreography, and performance art for instance. Trinh Minh-ha speaks of the documentary film as ‘the repetitive, artificial resurrection of the real’ (2013:71). Reality, she continues ‘is more fabulous, more maddening, more strangely manipulative than fiction’ (73) and adds that ‘a documentary aware of its own artifice is one that remains sensitive to the flow between fact and fiction’ (74).

Ethics of the unknown

Ultimately I am looking for a working ethics for staging documentary material. How can documentary theatre and performance avoid taking charge of and conquering the material offered in the process of turning someone else’s experience and story into art? What are the ethical implications of staging someone else’s life experience? Does this process possibly also violate the subjects who originally experienced the events to which the

material bears witness? Artists often feel attached to their work, and are concerned that the final product, which is connected to their name, carries a certain quality and artistic signature. It is in the process of interpretation that the positions of power are constituted, where interpretation is a form of writing over. Now this fact is not to be avoided when dealing with documents. However, instead of analysing – taking the archival material and using it for my own purpose and agenda, or changing it into my own image – I can at best attempt to encounter the material more carefully, through listening and seeing what the document brings to the table, by way of unexpected stories, movements, images, affects, associations and inspirations. It is about how I find a form to present it through reciprocal exchange between me as artist-creator and the documentary material itself affecting me and my act of creation: my attitudes, agendas, and intentions. I am looking for a conceptual framework to work from demanding a mutual encounter where no single agent has the power of definition over the other in the way humans tend to define every thing around us.

The ‘ethics of the unknown’ that I propose is not easily evoked; a shift of view requires practice and time. Ethics is always about relations: how we respond and react to given situations and things depends on how we perceive our relation to them. It is a question of how we place ourselves in relation to something, how we think about what we are facing and how we feel about ourselves and the other thing in the encounter. Ethics connects to action and behaviour. It concerns the ways in which we organize how we live with each other, and with every thing around us – spaces, objects, bodies, plants, winds, buildings, etc. An ethics of the unknown is an approach to documentary material and text-things that strives to preserve the unknown aspects of things. It is an ethics that opposes the normative tendency to always search for knowledge, proof, and making sense of things. Instead of striving toward a clear image and meaning production through a constructed narrative, it is more about acknowledging one’s own limitations in grasping reality. It is a matter of

deterritorialisation, challenging one's own ego position and rather working with patience, tenderness and time. To give time and to spend time with things is crucial in order to work within an ethics of the unknown. Time is a space for ethical relations as long as it is not filled with projections and imaginations of what things are or can become. To give time means to listen to what has not yet been formulated, or what cannot emerge as something seen or perceived. An ethics of the unknown demands time to sense what can only be perceived as a notion, as a murmur or as a light touch of air.

Knud E. Løgstrup is concerned with trust as a ground for ethics when we dare to step forward and relate to the other. Trust is the basis of relationality in human existence, in Løgstrup's view. How we relate colours and affects the world of the other. It is our attitude that matters. Løgstrup says: 'Therefore it is an unspoken, that is to say anonymous, demand to each of us to take care of that life [of the other], which trust has laid in our hands' (1991: 40). Silvia Benso develops this thought by claiming that things also carry an ethical demand. She introduces the concept of tenderness as a way for humans to access the unknown, or the metaphysical, in and through things. Benso speaks about how things call for being treated with tenderness. '[Tenderness is a] sentiment but not a psychological feeling, [it] is rather a metaphysical horizon, a way of being which, aroused by the appeal of things, enables the move to the ethical place of their encounter' (2000: 167). She understands touch as being the privileged mode of entering into a relationship with things. The experience of touch can never be abstract or reduced to universality - it is always particular and specific. Tenderness needs time, listening and attention. Attention takes place in a mode of waiting where you do not know what you are waiting to be attentive for Benso says. Ethics of the unknown is a mode of staying with things, being tender towards something indeterminate, not knowing how to act, and attempting not to project my own needs, dreams and wishes but to let them be formed in and through the encounter. 'It is in

the situation of doubt, in the moment of choice, when you ask yourself, “How shall I act?”, that you are opening up the space of ethics’ (Ridout 2009: 12).

WOE, Encountering Loss, Childism

In the following I will give a brief description of the three projects that were presented to live audiences under the scope of this research project. My role in *WOE* was as assistant dramaturg and in the two other projects I held the role as dramaturg, instigator, and project leader.

The performance *WOE* was conceived and directed by Amsterdam-based artist Edit Kaldor. It is a performance that addresses the topic of child abuse and neglect using documentary material. It premiered in its first version in Leuven, Belgium at the art-centre STUK on the 19th March 2013. There were three young performers on stage at the premiere, David de Lange and Kobbe Koopman (aged 18) and Merel Ouwehand (aged 16). For the second round of performances in Amsterdam in April the same year, one more performer – Tirza Gevers, aged 16 – was added to the cast. Later Ouwehand stepped out of the production, which has been touring with the three remaining performers. The text of the performance is largely based on a series of recorded conversations with our informant who is a victim of several forms of abuse. Mostly she responded to questions we posed related to the ways in which we thought we could dramaturgically build the script, which was centred around questions of how a child experiences living with daily threats of abuse. The performers also contributed to the text material, sharing dreams and reflections. In the performance the three teenagers stand close to the audience on a narrow stage. They pose a series of questions to the audience, asking them to imagine their own childhood and if they can imagine what it feels like living under daily threat. They discuss what to do in situations of threat of violence and also how the body reacts to this type of stress. The

dramaturgical centre point of the piece is the question of how close it is possible to come to understanding the world an abused child is living in. *WOE* does not explicitly describe situations of abuse. It focuses on abuse as violence and neglect, avoiding speaking of sexual abuse, because this is the form of abuse given most attention in the public domain, often with erotic inclinations. Other forms of violence and neglect against children are much less known and discussed. Historically it has been relatively common to beat children in many cultures, a fact that is seldom spoken of and which may explain the silence. This decision triggered my further research to explore how to stage explicit recounts of sexual abuse in the project *Childism*.

Encountering Loss was a project I initiated in collaboration with dramatist and director Toril Solvang. The National Theatre in Oslo hosted the project through providing rehearsal space, performing space, and a producer. Further we recruited seven young collaborators: Simon Aasheim, Justine Nguyen, Helene Skogland, Aurora Solvang, Thomas Stene-Johansen, Aksel Tjønn, and Nel Ewa Tomczyk. The project was structured as a series of three workshops during the span of a year. The first and last workshops lasted five days, and the middle one lasted for ten days. After each workshop, a public presentation of the material was held at the theatre (23rd February 2013, 17th August 2013, and 22nd February 2014). We used the play *Tideline/ Litoral* by Lebanese/Canadian dramatist and director Wajdi Mouawad as a working tool and a starting point for discussions around the topic of loss. The goal was not to stage the play but to use it as a platform for dialogues. From these discussions we moved on to practical tasks such as short writing exercises, interviews with family members about loss, questioning people on the street, performative actions in public space such as pretending to be crying, sleeping or wounded, meeting with social workers or other people in official positions, listening to official talks on related topics. The last day of each workshop we listed the various tasks we had done during our days together and

chose what we wanted to present to the audience. We did not use costumes except for similar T-shirts, and we occupied the space we were given without adding any set design. There was always a conversation with the audience at the end of each presentation. The first workshop and presentation took place in the theatre's restaurant as it was the only available space at the time. It is a baroque space with golden ornaments and red velvet furniture. The two other presentations took place in the theatre's small black box stage where we presented our material inside another production's scenography. When recruiting participants for the project, the call was for young people between the age of 15 and 20 who were politically and socially engaged and interested in discussing and speaking their opinions.

In *Childism* I wanted to return to the topic of child abuse using the same material from *WOE*. This time, I wanted to work closer with the informant, work with adult performers, and question how and if we could speak explicitly of sexual abuse in front of an audience. I engaged actor Petra Fransson and dancer Henriette Slorer who collaborated on the project and shared the dramaturgical labour with me. There was no director involved and we did not work with costume or set designers. The presentation took place at the Norwegian Theatre Academy, Østfold University College on the 14th November 2015. The manuscript consisted of transcribed sections of conversations with the informant, interviews we had done with friends about child-rearing, our own accounts, information from a dialogue with a judge, and citations from the Norwegian law and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). There was also a short excerpt from the script of *WOE*. The piece explored how to engage the audience in a conversation around such a taboo topic when we could not lean on the charm of teenagers, as was the case in *Encountering Loss*. The performers were sewing on stage when the audience entered. Each audience member was given a sewing kit and invited to sew during the presentation if they wanted to. The activity of sewing was

intended as a connective tool in the space of performing, hoping to create a relaxed and communal feeling between performers and audience.

A filmed documentation of the second presentation of *Encountering Loss*, in Norwegian without subtitles (part of the audience conversation is translated and transcribed into this thesis), as well as one of *Childism* in English are included as appendices.

Dramaturgy

The practice of the dramaturg is the focal point and methodology of this research project. Through the projects outlined above, I have tested ways to relate to documentary material practically, verbally, ethically and philosophically. I have explored the notion of the dramaturg as a nomadic subject, drawing on Rosi Braidotti's nomadic theory. It is a subject that lives in and with transformations affected by encounters with other things and bodies. A nomadic dramaturg interrogates and negotiates power relations, always shifting positions and engaging in different ways with her surroundings. It involves a thinking process in motion that strives to materialise thought and discover the unity between mind and body as a way to transgress duality. The nomadic dramaturg thinks through physical presence in rehearsals that involves sensorial listening on all levels. The focus is on experiencing relations and formations that take place in the encounter between things, and on becoming aware of those movements and giving them space and time to evolve. She will work on provoking as well as being provoked, to be both in and out of time. 'Thinking is about tracing lines of flight and zigzagging patterns that undo dominant representations' writes Braidotti (2011: 2). The nomadic dramaturg seeks to combine potentially contradictory elements in order to open up spaces for difference, avoiding identification and narration as something that affirms. It is about engaging and negotiating between form and formlessness, and becomings rather than beings.

I discuss the work of the dramaturg in relation to a common contemporary perception of the dramaturg as holding a position in between other more clarified roles such as actors, dancers, director, designer, etc. However, the nomadic dramaturg seems to make her own role become almost obsolete when the dramaturgical labour becomes work shared between everyone and everything involved. What happens then to the dramaturg? Is she redundant? When the dramaturgical work is shared within the working ethics of the unknown and the nomadic subject, the other roles and functions are also partly dispersed and shared. What the different agents involved offer then is active relation and various worlds ‘presenced’ and withdrawn through those active encounters. It is in the interdependent relational spaces between them that the artwork can be performed. The various agents have different rhythms. In my work as a dramaturg I attempt to work with the ethics of the unknown through sensitivity towards the activity of other collaborators and their relations to things, bringing a different focus to the work as a whole. Perhaps it is at the moment when the dramaturg becomes obsolete that she enters the stage, as I did in *Childism*?

Documentary things

This thesis is a thing, an encyclopaedia and an assemblage. It articulates a range of themes, concepts, terms and ideas drawn from and reflecting the research. It also presents (or represents) documents from the process, including photographs mainly taken by myself. The concrete subject matters (child abuse and loss) that are dealt with in the scope of this research are not possible to document through photography. They belong to the border areas of the visible. How to represent pain, atrocities, and trauma is a pertinent and difficult question. To bring up a subject such as child abuse is to touch on taboo and the unimaginable for most people. This research has attempted to find ways of bringing the unimaginable closer to the surface, in order for it to become imaginable so that we can perceive the signs, the bodies, the tensions, the expressions and the imagining of children

living with abuse, and also to question the ways we as individuals, parents and society relate to children in our culture. If we cannot bear the pain of hearing about these experiences, how can we ever believe they are taking place and how will we be able to act with compassion when we encounter victims? It is important though to stress that the ethical dimension of this research project does not have to do specifically with the subject matter of child abuse, but with the ethics of performance, documentary theatre and their relation to object oriented ontology.

Using different forms within the thesis (texts of different kinds, drawings, photographs) is a way to open up for greater complexities in the encounter with a reader. I have found it relevant to use different kinds of containers of information in order to widen the scope of what has been taking place. Each of them has been chosen for their specific qualities, but also for their relationship to the other entries of the encyclopaedia and the dramaturgical rhythms it forms. The drawings and the photographs are not chosen for their beauty or the way they explain or picture something specific. Rather, they are chosen because they project a call for us to relate, which Silvia Benso would call their 'faciality' (Benso 2000) and Roland Barthes would refer to as the 'punctum' (Barthes, 2000), a sensitive point that 'shoots out and pierces me' (26). As things do, the various things in this thesis shape and form each other. '[T]here is an interplay between image and text in the writing of history: texts that should make image accessible, and images that should make texts imaginable' writes Harun Farocki (2013: 158) in his examination of how photographic 'evidence' from the Holocaust was unimaginable without witness testimonies to support them. The various texts, accounts (like emails and excerpts from performance scripts), drawings, and images produce knowledge precisely through the relationship between them. All the included texts, drawings, and images have been produced and shaped during the process of the research. One could call them traces of a process but I believe they are more than

remnants. They are separate things, however linked to and formed by the process as they have reciprocally shaped the process and its live presentations. I see each thing in this thesis as separate and related, brought further into encounters with readers.

The Encyclopaedia

Historical writing traditionally strives to piece fragments together in the search for a complete image. The historian was known to seek the essential truth about the past in order to store it and preserve it in the archive for us to be able to move ahead. It was a static image of truth and the past, which was presented. The positivist archive is about resisting movement, change, and disintegration, which object-oriented philosophy considers as the characteristics of things and objects. Consequently positivist archiving is an attempt to preserve past life experiences. What a materialist practice of writing does is to actively relate to the things from the research archive (experiences, conversations, notes, images, drawings, live presentations, artefacts, spaces, people, clothes, emails, etc.) demonstrating that the past cannot be described through a coherent narrative. Rather it is constructed into an assembly, which is neither linear, static, definite nor possible to exhaust of its form or meaning. This is due to the notion of things always having a side that is withdrawn from us. No matter what perspective we take on it, we can never construct a complete picture. Things are vibrant, thus always transforming and changing themselves and their environment. The past is a mental structure assembled from the encounter with other things: just like reality is a constructed concept, porous and always in transformation but still, a thing that can never be fully accessed, understood or known.

I have chosen to reassemble the material in this thesis into an encyclopaedia. The encyclopaedia has offered a structure where the work at my writing desk is coherent with the work composing with other collaborators in the rehearsal space. Both processes are

about editing material in sections without linear narrative and discovering connections, resonances and dissonances. Both processes are about creating a form through finding rhythms and movement between the various things included in the composition. The encyclopaedia consists of a number of shorter or longer texts and images of different kinds that stand separate and connected. Each of them speaks of an aspect or a concept connected to the overall research project.

The alphabetic ordering of this encyclopaedia has directed and given form to the content of the thesis. However, by organising the titles under each letter non-alphabetically I have intervened in the alphabetic ordering. The various entries relate to each other, creating an intentional dramaturgical rhythm if read in their sequence in this document. However, the reader will discover that in each entry there are some bolded words. Those refer to the headings of other entries in the encyclopaedia and function as ‘analogue hyperlinks’. They allow for the possibility of creating other dramaturgies in the text, and the choice of reading any entry in any chosen order. In each entry I have only bolded the words the first time they appear. This model allows the material to be constantly shaped and reshaped, finding new forms and possibly new constructions of meaning with each encounter with a reader.

The reason for returning to a printed format rather than solely an online encyclopaedia, which would allow for digital hyperlinks, relates to the nature of this research project. When focusing on dramaturgy and object-oriented thinking, it makes sense to present the thesis as an object that can be held in the reader’s hands: something to be touched and explored with all senses. The thesis as a material object introduces a specific rhythm, which is usually slower than an online version would be. Time creates relational spaces where encounters can move and transform. To spend time in the company of things is a

way to witness and live with them through change and transformation – in one's self as much as in things surrounding us. The book (or in this case the printed thesis) keeps the reader both within a certain time frame and also within the physical frame of the pages. The frame creates an invitation to spend some time with a specific topic which the encyclopaedia deals with. The encyclopaedia as printed matter presents a specific world and field of knowledge. The invitation is to enter into that world and stay for some time, as opposed to an online version, which would quickly connect the reader to other worlds outside its own topical framework.

An encyclopaedia is most often co-authored by several writers composing articles on the various topics included. In this version the various voices are represented in a different way; through transcription of conversations, excerpts from scripts by other people than myself, emails and other records. Inspired by object-oriented philosophy, which questions ego and subject constructions and if 'life' and 'self' are connected to specific bodies, the encyclopaedia avoids using the 'I' form as a way to question the authoritative voice. This however, is complicated since I am the individual composing the thesis in order to meet the demands of a PhD, which exist inside an academic and scientific structure based on subjective viewpoints and work. At times I use the form 'she' where I explicitly refer to the experiences of the dramaturg and researcher. The form 'we' however, is used throughout to enhance the fact that all work including this thesis, takes its shape through relations and encounters between many things where the subjective 'I' is only one.

The form of the encyclopaedia as a collection of things separate and connected, offers spaces not only for the known, but also for the unknown to be preserved in the same way as we attempt to preserve and respect the unknown aspects of things in performance. As such, the encyclopaedia discloses knowledge of the practice as much in what is articulated,

as in the spaces between each entry offering the potential to experience what is not (yet) presenced. Finding a similar structure for the thesis as we have for the live presentations creates possibilities for constantly making new connections and entanglements between things that can open for different processes of understanding, knowing and not-knowing. The encyclopaedia and I have affected each other through our relation and encounter with everything else that is and has been in touch with it: the things that are included and the things that have been excluded. Thus like all things this thesis-thing is partly revealed and partly withdrawn.

I don't know if it is at all possible to stage documentary material in a 'truthful' way. The focus has rather been to expose our own struggle to understand and to relate to the topic and the given material: in the thesis, in *WOE*, in *Encountering Loss*, and in *Childism*. Ethically we need to communicate that this is *our* view and *our* processing of what we have access to understand, and that we keep questioning what we know: acknowledging that knowing always implies a not-knowing. The theatre-thing is not about representing any truth or reality, but about opening up a space where we can relate to things connected to child abuse, experiences of loss or any other topic, and reflect on how we as individuals and collectives can deal with the challenges these areas of life bring.

Theatre – ting

Toward a Materialist Practice of Staging Document

An Encyclopaedia of a Research Project

A

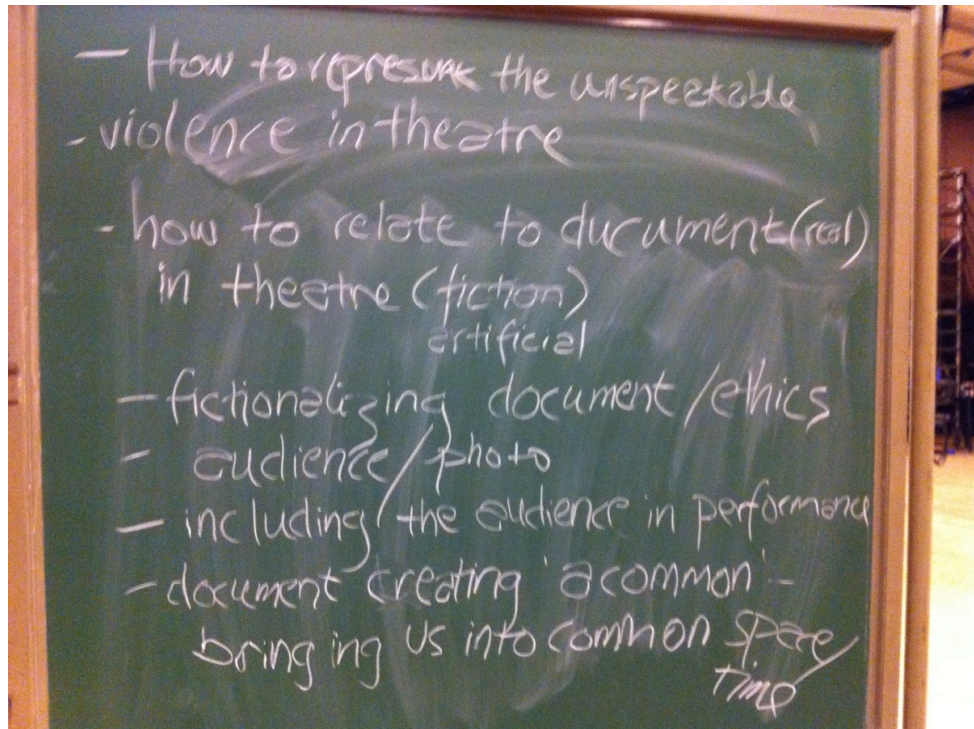
August 2011, from the working diary

In front a huge plane dry and dusty. It is an open landscape. Plants, objects, and people will slowly start occupying this space and at some point one may even get lost amongst it all. But now there is time to enjoy the sensation of this openness, the fearful excitement felt, not knowing in which direction to walk. Make just one step at the time.

At large, the project deals with ethics and questions of what art and performance is supposed to do in our time and culture. What function may it have as a place of gathering, personal and physical encounters, confrontations and, potentially, dialogues?

Eleven days ago the country where this research takes place was hit by its first terrorist attack since the Second World War. A bomb destroyed the offices of 1800 employees in the governmental buildings including the prime minister's office, killed eight people and put an estimated 325 people in life threatening danger. Then the terrorist moved to a small island where young people between the ages of 13 and 25 had a political left-wing summer camp. There he executed 69 politically-active youth. Another 33 people were sent to hospitals with serious gunshot wounds (Njølstad, Ryste & Stang, 2014). Another 3-500 young people swam for their lives from the island or hid in caves, and are left with invisible scars caused by fear of death and seeing their friends killed in front of their eyes

Somehow there is hope to make the research matter beyond the art community. Somehow there is hope to find a language that can be of use to others who believe in the power of gatherings and sharing time and space.



Assemblages

Assemblages are collections of things. Each separate **thing** is also an assemblage in and of itself because it is the effect of many causes that come together shaping a form. Each thing, each assemblage, or each **body** is constantly moving and transforming as a result of affecting and being affected by other things and bodies. According to Jane Bennett 'bodies enhance their power *in or as a heterogeneous assemblage*' (2010:23), an idea she has adopted from Spinoza (1992, first published 1677). Bennett continues to refer to Deleuze and Guattari's notion of assemblage as 'ad hoc groupings of diverse elements, of vibrant materials of all sorts' (23). She continues: 'no central head governs them and they are never a solid block but an open-ended collective' (24). This text is both an assemblage as well as a collection of things. The dramaturgical work in the performance projects *WOE*,

Encountering Loss and *Childism* works with assemblages containing endless possibilities of form. There is no ideal dramaturgical structure or form to a given collection of things. Any assemblage could have looked different, given a different distribution of the things that shapes it. However, in the end the various things find their temporary places forming a shape, which has the potential to change at another time and place.

Audience

An audience is a group of people, or just one person, who watches ‘other people do it’ as performer Robin Arthur from Forced Entertainment says in the beginning of the company’s performance *Showtime* (1996). The perceived dichotomy between doing (acting) and watching in the theatre is reflected in how a traditional theatre space is organized with a division between a framed proscenium stage and auditorium where the audience is seated, usually in the dark. This spatial arrangement also indicates a fictional framed image, which is contemplated from a collective ‘real’ in the auditorium. Asking if spectating is a purely passive position, Jacques Rancière (2009) argues that spectating is a reflexive position that is as active as physical activity. He points out that looking is an action that involves **interpretation**, which is already a means of transforming and reconfiguring a given image of a world. It is the spectator’s line of associations, dreaming and imagining triggered by what is presented to her, which is her way to participate and continuously create more things. This ‘equality of intelligence’ is what binds individuals in the audience and on the stage together. It is simultaneously that which separates them.

Encountering Loss, second presentation in the smaller black box stage at the National Theatre in Oslo, 17th of August 2013. Around sixty people are gathered together with seven young performers and two project leaders to exchange thoughts, words, experiences, reflections, and feelings about the topic of loss. At the entrance audience members are

invited to write down anything or anyone they have lost or want to remember, and to put the note into a small box. When they find their seats the seven performers walk around between the audience members, shaking their hands and welcoming them, before lining up on stage to read **lists of loss** from sheets of paper. Later, audience members are asked to stand up and answer simple questions about what they have lost. The answers are given in silence through the act of sitting down. For instance: if you have ever lost your pride, sit down. In this way the audience can see that they are always part of a temporary community of for instance ‘those who have lost pride’ or ‘those who have not lost pride’. Towards the end of the presentation the notes the audience have left in the box prior to entering the theatre are read aloud.

After the presentation, audience members are invited to engage in a **conversation** with the collaborators of the work presented. In this situation, are the audience members onlookers, friends, fellow human beings, witnesses, conversational partners, participants, or **collaborators**? Perhaps it is less important to answer this question. A more central question to ask may be how one engages and stages a conversation with an audience, and what such a conversation is for. The latter question addresses the social dimension of the work of a dramaturg. In all parts of this PaR project, from research to rehearsals and the presentation to an audience, the focus has been on process, **relation** and dialogue rather than performance as a product. These aspects play a part in how the conversations with the audience develop, oscillating and combining topics of form and matters of loss and grief or child abuse. Some audience members felt uncertain of what they had witnessed during *Encountering Loss*. Was it a performance, a lecture or simply a discussion? Perhaps another label is needed for this kind of exchange. The theatre can offer and allow an aesthetic, playful and even naïve exploration of a theme, a case, or a problem, in which

audiences can engage and take part. Audiences and performers share the same time, space, floor and air.

Kai Van Eikels (2011) writes about participation and a letting go in the way of treating material, and links it to the way jazz music improvisation developed in the mid-20th century; namely, practicing a mode of listening and a porous distribution of changing roles praised as a model for political democratic processes. This, he claims, took place due to the fact that jazz musicians did not play for an audience; rather, they played for a group of people who like themselves, were trained in this form of listening (whether they actively played an instrument or not). It was an artistic subculture, which he claims stopped functioning in this way when it started drawing bigger audiences. In this case we could call the listeners who are not on stage to be the ‘performing audience’. Van Eikels also claims that contemporary audiences have high competence in performance, as the performative turn and the demands to perform have gained a heightened focus in global capitalism. Van Eikels introduces *synchronizing*, which he argues replaces the idea that community means that we exist together in a coherent space. Rather, he points to a synchronizing process where various rhythms tune into each other. According to Van Eikels, this happens when our individual **rhythms** are generated and start to move between us. This movement, however, also demands a medium that can transmit information in all the directions between everyone involved. In the theatre, text can be such a medium. Synchronizing is temporary and carries difference. The goal with Van Eikels’s concept of synchronizing is not to end up with a common rhythm, which would represent a utopia rather than a democracy. But rather to open up for places where various rhythms can co-exist, exchange, and affect each other. In *Encountering Loss*, which dealt with the topic of loss both in a serious but also a playful way, Van Eikels’s idea of synchronizing potentially starts vibrating. *Childism*, on the other hand, dealt with a much more taboo topic, which is

difficult to access for a general theatre audience. Feelings of pain, sorrow, and grief were aroused, perhaps occasionally also mixed in with shame and guilt. The concept of synchronizing may also be valid to use in this case, albeit differently, less fluid and with more halts, resistance, and changes of direction of the rhythms and energies in motion. If the audience was more specific in the presentation of *Childism*—for instance, a group of people who relate to topics of children and abuse in their professional life—a different rhythm and ways of synchronizing may have occurred, comparable to that of jazz music improvisations in the mid 20th century.

Can audiences and performers stay in their respective roles if we regard all bodies as things? Considering the materiality of space and **body** as an equal exchange of rhythms and energies questions or even dissolves the perceived gap between performers and spectators. Spectating bodies and performing bodies co-relate, shape, and influence each other. All bodies present in the theatre event (sentient and non sentient beings) are connected and entangled. Without each other they will not come into appearance as what they are in the shared moments of performance. Audiences are conversational partners without whom the work of the dramaturg would become pointless.

Actor

An actor is a playful character. It is someone who does things in front of an **audience**. He or she plays with mystery, with uncertainty, with emotions, with thoughts. She is a trickster who sets up a situation to believe and not believe in simultaneously. An actor is someone who performs acts. A performer is someone who tells stories reflecting life itself, partly fictional and partly factual, with or without words, always with movements, with sounds, and with images. The term *actor* suggests a trained performer different from other performers such as **dancers**, acrobats, clowns, mime artists, musicians etc. The term

performer includes any person from any field, trained or not trained, who performs in front of someone watching.

An actor is someone who is engaged in a living relationship with other things, often text, fellow performers, props and objects, costumes, movement patterns, thoughts and ideas, spaces and timeframes. In the context of **documentary theatre**, the text is often based on a real life story from someone still alive. When approaching the actor Petra Fransson to ask if she wanted to take part in the project *Childism*, she responded in the following way:

Oh, what a demanding project...what a responsibility! I have never worked with documentary material and to be honest I feel reluctant to drama that treats real events and stories that are close in time. It is difficult in relation to treating it as an autonomous work, to find the right approach, the right entrance point of address, the right level. It is difficult with sovereignty in relation to the material: to allow oneself to be disrespectful. It has to do with hermeneutics, a distance in time and space are the most important factors in order for the spaces of interpretation to open up.

(Fransson, 2013, my translation)

Dealing with material from contemporary lived experiences, as opposed to fictional or historical material, is an ethical challenge. When introducing the idea of meeting the informant to the three young performers in *WOE* (the first production under this PaR project, directed by Edit Kaldor), they got nervous. They were after all taking her words in their mouths without clearly stating it to the audience. They were nervous that she would feel they had violated her story and words, that they were not able to tell some kind of truth or authenticity, that it would all be fake. Fransson, on the other hand, felt that her meeting with the informant set her free in relation to the material because it was clear that the informant had taken a conscious choice to let the artistic team use her collections of words

and stories, and that her participation was not therapeutic. Questions of how to produce truthfulness often seem to be important for professionally-trained actors. This stands in relation to skills, methods, and techniques for keeping a text or a scene ‘alive’ and with a feeling of authenticity when having to repeat the same thing many times. Some actors like to improvise and have skills in doing that; other actors need to ‘**know**’ what they are doing and remain in control over the material on stage.

The common agreement between a general audience and actors seem to be that of playing the game of make believe. That means that both parties are looking for truthfulness at the same time that everyone involved has a feeling theatre is not ‘real’. If, and how much, an actor should feel what their character feels or leave it up to the audience is a known paradox throughout theatre history famously brought into the discourse by Denis Diderot in *The Paradox of Acting* (written 1773, published 1883). Many actors feel their labour is connected to finding a clear **interpretation** and giving vocal and physical form to a text, which implies deciding who you are impersonating when speaking the words (e.g., a distinct character figure from a play, a reporter, a relative, a doctor etc.). It means imagining what relation you have to a certain text or knowing with what intention you speak it. Other actors claim there is no need for this kind of interpretation because all the information necessary lies in the text itself. There is no need to imagine a relationship, it is simply a question of being in the relationship that already exists – pleasant or not. The only thing the actor has to do is to give the text a **voice** and a **body**. The audience will take care of the interpretation, projecting a character onto the speaking body in relation to a specific text voiced and heard. In their discussion on how to get the ‘now’ into a text, Turner and Behrndt reference an essay by Patrice Pavis (2000, cited in Turner & Behrndt 2008). He proposes that certain new dramatic texts (such as those by Sarah Kane) make the actor into an ‘actor-dramaturg’, whose work is necessary to ‘unfold’ rather than ‘interpret’ the text.

Turner and Behrndt continue: ‘it is therefore the role of the “actor-dramaturg” to bring to Kane’s plays the materiality of the body, the semiotic qualities of the voice, to enter into these problems of articulation without necessarily resolving them’ (Turner & Behrndt, 2008: 193). When working on the documentary material in *Childism*, Fransson and dancer Henriette Slorer were concerned with a certain precision with which a trained performer is able to treat the material through years of training vocal and physical nuances in their expressions.

During *Encountering Loss* and *Childism* we worked on creating distance from the textual material in different ways, emotionally and technically, through sometimes consciously avoiding learning text by heart emphasising the gap between the actor and the text. This reflects the tradition of the alienation effect (V-effect) from Bertolt Brecht to the present. Brecht had a concrete political agenda using a mode of acting with distance to have his audience reflect rather than feel. In the framework of this research project, the act of distancing from the text serves the purpose of opening up a space where **relation** can take place—including feeling, sensing, listening and reflecting without separating between those modes of relating to material. The relational space is also where a reciprocal movement between things happens, each affecting the other on equal terms. This is inspired from object-oriented philosophy, which is concerned with the ways things inter-relate when considered separate but still co-dependent shaping and transforming each other on equal terms.

In this context we are working on documentary texts without any constructed character; thus, there is no character to alienate from. Fransson differentiated between being *emotional with* the material and being *sensitive to it*, where the latter incorporates a mode of taking care and stepping back from one’s own emotions but still reacting sensitively to

the given material. The labour of ‘acting’ or ‘playing’ is also questioned here, where the distance is about a level of simplicity in **speaking** the text as a bridge between listening bodies in the audience and on stage. Below is a transcript from the video documentation of the third presentation of *Encountering Loss* at the National Theatre in Oslo in February 2014, which demonstrates how the collaborators related to the material, how they perceived their role as actors in the presentation, and how they framed the labour of performing.

Audience Member: I have seen all three presentations [of Encountering Loss] and it has been exciting to see how you have slowly gotten deeper into the topic. Of course you can always work more, but there is a kind of feeling of authenticity that has been established. Even if it is perhaps not a “proper” theatre performance with costumes, set designs etc., I still get very touched by this through the way you have been working with the texts and the topic, and the proximity you have to the material.

Justine: Many of us have experience from theatre, where a lot has been focussed around psychology and feelings, to feel a lot when you read a text. But Toril and Camilla have been very concerned that we should not pretend but keep a space open between us and the text.

Helene: When it comes to the way we allow ourselves to read from the manuscript on stage, it is a result of time restrictions. But we have also tried to rehearse some scenes from the play, but we found that this form worked well with what we want to present.

Aksel: Everyone has a personal relationship to loss so it is perhaps not so necessary to play or perform in that sense?

Nela: Yes, a year ago I thought; am I going to stand on a stage at the National Theatre and not act? It is a bit strange, but after having heard people’s stories and how honest everyone is, it feels strange to act in a traditional sense because what was being said was so good, it worked and it was enough just to say it.

(Encountering Loss, 2013b, my translation)

Amateur Aesthetics

In the context of theatre and performance, there is often an emphasis on the difference between a professional and an amateur actor or performer. The main differences concern the amount of money paid for an acting job, and who has formal training in the profession. There are many examples, however, of people without formal degrees in acting that work as professionals, meaning working as paid actors.

Due to short rehearsal time in *Encountering Loss* and the fact that our performers were not professionally trained actors, the texts were delivered in an unpolished, simple, and perhaps naïve manner in relation to many schools and methods of text practice for actors. Different types of texts in *Encountering Loss* were performed in the same way: matter-of-fact; read from pieces of paper brought on stage; unrehearsed, and without any attempt at identification, or to communicate a specific **interpretation**. This creates an aesthetic of ‘amateurisation’ known especially from companies like Forced Entertainment, Baktruppen, Gob Squad, She She Pop, and the New York City Players among many others. These companies do, for the most part, work with trained performers who use amateur aesthetics to question norms and conventions, not only in theatre practice, but also in social behaviour as such. Their work goes against late capitalist demands of ‘good’ and ‘expert’ performance where presenting a certain set of skills is equivalent to a certain measure of success. Sarah Jane Bailes writes on failure and Forced Entertainment:

A loosening of those categories [amateur and professional] that serve to indicate different standards and categories of “work” allows for an interrogation of the assumed evaluative criteria we hold up to art-practice. And it problematizes notions of mastery and skill that dictate (but also limit) our watching as spectator-critics of performance.

(Bailes, 2011: 97)

Her last point, about how spectators are confronted with their own watching and wish for a display of skills, became an important aspect for the presentations of *Encountering Loss*. Audiences seemed to quickly decode the fact that the performers were clearly not skilled in acting, text work, or any other performance skill. Thus it was pointless to spend time evaluating them on these terms. Instead the focus was turned to the content of the presentations, their engagement, and their drive to communicate. Professional actors need to train to obtain an aesthetic of ‘amateurisation’. They are usually taught to interpret and colour a text with moods and emotions. In *Childism* the actors impulse to get close to the experience of the informant through the text seemed to be automatized through an attempt of emphatic emotional identification. This was thoroughly problematized throughout the process, and identification was exchanged by words such as care and **tenderness**. The impression was that Fransson needed a notion of a character even if she did not try to ‘be’ the character on stage. She called it the attitude (*förhållningssätt*) or the attitude she needed for a certain text in order to be able to differentiate between the various text excerpts. This can be experienced as a layer or a mask between the performer and the material that the amateur has not learned to work with or produce in any nuanced way. For the actor one of the most difficult tasks is to ‘just read’ the text without getting a feeling of failure and of not ‘doing the job’. What felt like an accomplishment for the amateur felt like a failure for the professionally trained actor who is concerned with precision in her art, which can be articulated as a skill and a consciousness of discriminating and choosing what and how to act. Acting for a professional can be understood as the ability to always make choices and be conscious and responsible for all actions on stage. The level of consciousness and control is a way to act ethically. Is the actor or amateur who ‘fails’ to have this control irresponsible? Or can she be seen to act ethically through the way she connects and situates herself and her actions in relation to other things, not taking but sharing responsibilities?

When talking about what the amateur naturally brings to the stage it may be helpful to look at how some trained performers find ways of creating an ‘amateur aesthetic’ as a way of ‘deskilling’. Many companies in the 1990s started to explore failure as a strategy to critique the virtuosic aesthetic that had started to dominate the European and North American theatre scenes. The idea of failure opened up for a possibility of relating, because it included losing a professional mask, a danger that the amateur feels vibrating each time she goes onto a stage but which trained actors have learned to master. The amateur tries to avoid failure but has no technique to help her. Both amateur and professional measure failure against a more or less defined idea of success connected to conventions of acting and theatre. However, some performers have become skilled in strategies of producing and handling failure on stage. For those, failing would mean to fail in failing. In the practice of this research, we have focussed on relating to the material and other things in the moments of performing, which at best removes the dichotomy between failing and succeeding.

Within a contemporary cultural context, one that is saturated with staged images and emotional stories of lived lives, amateur aesthetics provide an aura of authenticity to the event and thus a feeling of getting closer to a ‘truth’ or something ‘real’. It is an aesthetic in which the promise of failure in regard to standard performing skills creates a slippery ground where the **audience** does not get the expected polished product of a performance piece. Bailes writes: ‘in the “slip” truth seems to be revealed; for the witness becomes aware of its presence in error...’ (2011: 98). Dramatist and director Richard Maxwell and his company the New York City Players are known for their amateur aesthetics, where they have been identified as performing bad acting on purpose (Gorman, 2011). According to Gorman, Maxwell questions the dominance of method acting in the American educational system, and explores a materialist approach to performing. By focussing on

external things, subject formation becomes a relational matter, and characters are seen as players in larger cultural forces (38).

Many actors spend years training their sensory apparatus and what method acting calls 'sensory memory'. It is a way to use personal experiences to arouse emotions that can reflect and stand in for the emotions the character is imagined to have at certain moments in a play. This is a technique that is not available to the amateur, who has not learned to control her emotions or to expose them when needed. The natural reaction for an amateur is rather to hold back her feelings while not being able to control them completely, creating more chaotic, messy, and complex expressions, which lies closer to how we act in real-life encounters. One way in which contemporary theatre since the 1970s has attempted to have the actors disconnect from the techniques of producing emotions through a psychoanalytic analysis of the play and the character is to have them focus on physical tasks while speaking a text. This represents a task-based approach where the physical activity has to be complex enough so the actor is not able to also handle the emotional work. This is usually too complicated for an amateur to accomplish. What is accomplished through this approach is a distancing between the body of the actor and an imagined body of the character created from the words. Instead there is space for **relation** between the two. The amateur's non-trained body cannot avoid to relate and react to things in the surrounding context, a context that very often generates what is called stage fright, which a professionally trained performer spends years to learn how to control. Bailes is concerned with how mastery and skills dictate the audience reception of a theatre performance, and suggests that other approaches open up for different understandings of '**reality**' as messier, less predictable and 'safe', and more complex, responding to a likewise messy and complex situation we call reality.

Are the performers in *Encountering Loss* amateurs? They don't have a degree in acting and they were not paid for their collaboration in the project. What they managed to do however, is possibly linked to what Gorman claims is the effect of Maxwell's work with his actors (both professionally trained and non-trained), which is to demonstrate 'the illusory nature of the stable, autonomous Humanist subject' (2011:48), pointing toward a more tangible and material reality. *Childism* aspired to work with the given documentary material, not within an acquired amateur aesthetics, but from a place where we relate to the material, each other and the audience as beings in transformation formed by our encounters rather than stable humanist subjects. Inspired by the work with the performers in *Encountering Loss*, this would imply very little repetition. However, Slorer and Fransson did not fully agree, arguing that their skills allow them to enter into a deeper and more nuanced relationship with the material precisely through repetition and exact staging. This may be true, but it also implies a more secure basis for control over what is expressed to an audience. What the present research was looking for was a position of less control on behalf of the performers and artists involved, questioning subjectivity to rather focus on the materiality of bodies, text, sounds, and things, exploring how they reciprocally affect and transform each other in the moments of sharing – letting unexpected and surprising formations take place, which include audiences. Perhaps a deskilling is needed for this to happen, or perhaps the utilisation of professional skills in order to find ways of letting things happen rather than making them happen?

When working with **documentary theatre**, skills and techniques can sometimes become an obstacle that blocks the relational movements between things. However, at other times skills and techniques for repeating enable the performer to spend time and stay with a material, to carefully explore nuances and be specific, which may reveal other aspects in the material over time. Working with relations as one of the guiding principles implies

listening to the needs of performers, which naturally shapes the aesthetics of the **presentation**. This research aspires to let all things affect the work, including an actor who may not agree with the director or the dramaturg. Thus, the dramaturg also has to challenge her ego structures and need for control. However, *Childism* was additionally shaped by a contrasting performance, that of the dramaturg who has limited acting skills and whose performance was not precise, but rather striving toward letting go of control and challenging notions of ‘good’ performance. A member of the audience commented on these matters during the presentation of *Childism*.

Audience Member: Somehow you both [actor and dancer] in the scene where you lie down and you explain to us, you made me anyway totally forget that you are professionals. Because somewhere you just saw these people in so much pain being roughly polished and trying their best to explain what they are going through. I think it was so beautiful. Very beautiful and brutal.

Henriette: I think it feels like that also because we are able to be specific.

Audience Member: Yeah, but you kind of pass the border where you think “Oh, this is a fantastic body...” because sometimes you get blinded because things are so good. But somewhere in the story you just forgot about that and you started to think, “Oh, is this your story, is this your pain?” and that to me is very beautiful, and very rare. [sic]

(*Childism*, 2015)

Audience conversation

In the following we will hear from the audience: how they experienced the live event. The following is a transcript from the recorded video documentation of *Encountering Loss*. It is from the dialogue between the performers, the audience and the two project leaders (Toril Solvang and Camilla Eeg-Tverbakk) as part of the second presentation at the National Theatre in Oslo, 17th August 2013. All names are authentic.

Audience Member:

I was very touched by what you did. You were really present in the space. You were good with the text and what you wanted to express. It struck me that in the combination of text sequences from the manuscript [the play Tideline by Wajdi Mouawad] combined with your own texts, both were equally strong in a way. You took the text from the play, which is about war and stuff we don't understand so well, and then suddenly it came so close to what you yourselves had experienced. That was really exciting. So thank you so much!

Audience Member:

Yes, I was also very touched. You were so present. And even if I haven't read the play, you had put it together in a way... it dealt with so many things.

Audience member:

I am not really sure what to say. I came here and I had no clue what this was all about. I didn't know anything prior to entering this space. To begin with I didn't really understand what this is, but after a relatively short time I got very touched by it. I sit here and listen and ask myself what it was that happened. What I experience that you do, which is really brave, is that you move very close to yourselves. I am curious to how old you are.

Performers: 16, 17, 20, 20, 18, 19, 21

OK, what is really interesting when you tell your own stories, I get a really, I get really close to your worlds. I am double the age of some of you, and I get a kind of flashback, and it is fantastic to see what you do. And you have managed to create something that feels really safe. And that you dare to do this — that touches me.

Thomas:

During the first workshop we didn't know each other so well. This time we know each other better, and we dare to be more critical toward each other. And ask why someone feels a certain thing is important to include in the presentation.

Audience Member:

It says online that you want to look at loss in relation to the political. Have you done that?

Helene:

There is a lot in the play which is from another culture, and we have spoken about that culture contra our own and questions related to that.

Simon:

But to create something with a clear political standpoint is difficult since we all have different political views.

Helene:

The relation between the political and the personal has been important. For instance when we went out in the streets with a mourning performance, it dealt a lot with the society we live in and questions related to that.

Justine:

I just want to say that what we have been working with is political because we have touched upon topics of war, what you loose in a war; identity, language, family, to come to a country as a refugee having to require a new identity perhaps. You have to adjust to a new society.

Camilla:

If I can add, Breivik is also political [the terrorist who shot down 69 youth at Utøya on the 22. July 2011. One of the collaborators on this project, Aurora, was on the island]. And we have brought that material to the table, one because it is about youth, but also because it is a good example of how the personal is connected to the political realm. And we have talked a lot about what is allowed in public space, which is also a political matter.

Audience Member:

Well, it was political. And you have touched many of us. Perhaps if we should be critical you were too good, it almost was a feel good experience. But this is put together of many parts and that creates meaning. Meaning is nothing of itself, it is something that occurs through the relationship between things, which makes us reflect. But what is your aim with it?

Camilla:

Our main goal as project leaders has been to spend time with this group of young people to have a chance to talk and discuss with them, and hear their opinions and views on such a big topic as loss in which you can put a lot of things both personal and political. And then we happen to work with performing arts so it has been the most accessible medium for us to share it with more people.

Helene:

For me the process is the most important part of this. Last Monday is as important as today when we present this to an audience. A lot happened on Monday and a lot happened today when we met the audience. Something that is really exciting with this project is the timeframe. It takes place over a whole year. We met for 5 days in February and for 10 days now, and suddenly half a year has passed. And we are going to work with the same topic and the same play again in another 6 months, and completely other things will happen. Had we worked intensively for two months this would have become something completely different.

Toril:

We all have different agendas and ways of approaching this. For me it is an exploration of what happens when you work over a longer period of time.

Thomas:

I really didn't even need to show this to anyone. For me it is about the process, to sit down in the group and discuss the topic and get to know other people's ways to deal with loss, their different views, has given me so much more than just presenting it to an audience.

Justine:

For me it has been interesting to experiment with different kinds of texts. We have explored ways of using a play in other ways than what we are used to — for those of us who have worked with theatre before. How a text can be connected to personal experiences. To be given the chance to produce your own texts in relation to a professional play. It has been so interesting to be playful with text and explore ways of staging your own text, what happens in the body and what kind of relation you have to your own writing.

Aurora:

I am the oldest in this group, and I originally thought it would be a huge difference between us. Thomas is only 16. I thought the difference was huge but when we started working together we are not that different. I feel everyone contributes equally to the process.

Aksel:

So again we can see this is about the encounter with the other.

Justine:

We have discussed how society does not relate openly with loss. And we have wanted to confront an audience with the topic.

Audience Member:

It was a very good performance, and I think you were very good at getting across different ways of dealing and working with loss and grief. I have two questions. The first is if you can say anything about what kind of theatre you are creating and the second is if you have thought about the difference between successful and failed process of grieving? When you either keep your loss as a memory, or where the loss feels so big you cannot get over it. And why are you all wearing white T-shirts? I believe the indirect communication works really well to engage and include us as audiences.

Aksel:

Regarding the T-shirts, we don't have a clear answer. It is open for interpretation.

Justine:

Grief is always personal. There is no right way to grieve.

Camilla:

The play has given us support in how to discuss and deal with questions of how to grieve. In the play for instance Simone is singing out her grief, and in her community she is met with critique by people who say that it is not the right way to grieve in relation to what she has experienced, and "that is not how we do it here". We have also discussed it in relation to the main character Wilfrid who is trying to find a place to bury his dead father. It deals with questions of how to move on, if we can move on, who can move on and so on.

Toril:

I am curious if you are able to answer the question of what kind of theatre this is.

Thomas:

We have not focussed so much on that question.

Aksel:

It is a problem; each time you decide something you also exclude a lot of other possibilities. We wanted to keep all possibilities open, so we chose not to take that debate.

Aurora:

We refer a lot to performance art, post-dramatic theatre, and perhaps epic theatre?

Camilla:

It has to be acknowledged that Toril and I set the framework very much by the tasks we give you. There is an inherent aesthetics in those choices and also in the restricted timeframe we actually meet in workshops. We work for 10 days and then we present. We decided yesterday what to show today and that also gives a specific aesthetics.

Audience Member:

I just want to say how much this touched me in my heart and my stomach. In relation to the aesthetics that obviously and clearly is there, but I still feel it is so real and I think it is interesting that there is no clear answer to what this is because what has been important is the encounter and what you want to say to us, and the dialogue you have really managed to establish with us.

Audience Member:

Questions that occur along the way include what kind of theatre this is. I question if it is theatre or something else. Because the way I experience it you go in and tell a story from the play, and then you move out of that and tell something very personal and you say: "This is me, this is my story, and it is true". We are at the National Theatre, you are on stage and I am seated in the auditorium. Then you come forward and speak about yourselves, and I ask is it theatre now or are we into something else? I think that perhaps it is something else but it does not matter in relation to my experience, which stays the same. But in relation to what kind of theatre this is, that is difficult to answer.

Thomas:

We have discussed that as well. Where are the borders for what is theatre.

Audience Member:

Yes, perhaps it is not theatre perhaps it is something else that is happening here?

Camilla:

We have spoken a lot about how we can use the theatre space as a place to have conversations.

Audience Member:

I was here in February as well when you performed in the restaurant. And I have to say, when I go to the theatre I like to sit in a black box like this and look down on the stage. In the restaurant it became almost too private but when I am here it is defined that I am in the theatre, even if I understand that you are personal in the text you are expressing. I like it much better here.

Thomas:

Can I ask you a question? What do you think about the fact that we don't tell you where the various text sources are from? If it is the play, our own written stuff, from an interview etc. Is that a problem that you don't know where it is coming from?

Audience Member:

I have to say I reacted a lot in the beginning when you read from Behring Breivik's defence speech [it was read by being fed the words through ear phones on stage] before I understood what it was. I reacted very strongly because the text goes against all my own values. And I thought, my god is there not going to be a framing around this, is it just going to be delivered like that. And I feel completely overheated inside and I still feel that. I am really provoked by that. When you spoke before about the dialogue with the audience, I thought do I dare to say this at the National Theatre and everything, but how can you say something like that without giving it a framework? Do you really mean what you are saying, right? It really provokes me.

Nel Ewa:

Yes, it was really difficult for me to speak this text because I very, very much disagree with Breivik. And it was hard to take that text and speak it loud in front of an audience, but it is also the point to trigger that kind of emotions.

Audience Member:

Yes, I hear that you have discussed many issues but was it conscious that you should not give your own interpretation for instance on that kind of text?

Thomas:

That specific text we discussed this morning if we should let the audience know before or not where it comes from, but decided not to.

Audience Member:

I would like to comment on that. I think it is extremely interesting and important question. I was thinking, why couldn't they let us know the premises for this work. And then of course there is the usual program note. It irritated me a bit, but gradually the performance came to be about exactly that: how meaning is constructed, what happens in the encounter with the other, or the encounter between the private and the personal, what you are telling and another story. So the form becomes the content in many ways; the way you invite us into a process and confront us with what that is. That becomes as important as what you actually have to say. That is exactly about how the meaning that we manage to create together is constructed. That makes it so interesting. The work is both very concrete, but it is also given an abstract dimension that we are part of, which is the process.

Audience Member:

I also experience that something else happens when we are not sure of the premises. Quite early you break conventions; for instance, you are watching and commenting on us. And that makes me wonder how far are they going to go. And that creates a feeling of insecurity in me. I become exposed, and I wonder if that is a conscious choice? As audience I feel unsafe.

Justine:

Is it important for you as audience to feel safe?

(Encountering Loss, 2013b, my translation)

AURORA'S TEXT

(from the first presentation, 23rd February 2013)

Is it OK, that I feel alright?

It is OK to cry. It is OK to feel pain. It is OK to be scared. It is OK to be angry. If you have experienced something painful you should be comforted, shown compassion and understanding. That is how a grieving process works. The bigger the tragedy the more pain and the more consolation.

One year and seven months ago, I was part of the biggest crisis in Norway since the Second World War. My pain should be so big it cannot be described in words, but the thing is I feel pretty good. I get up every morning, I smile to the world and the world smiles back. Now, you probably think that I am insensitive? That I am cold and cynical. Say what you want. When I look myself in the mirror, I see something important. I see that I am alive. I see that I have all my limbs safe and sound, and I see that I can stand, walk and even dance. And I walk out in the hallway in order to discover that the big dilemma of the day is if I should wear the black or the brown shoes. Think about it, and then I ask you: Is it OK that I feel alright?

(Solvang, 2013, my translation)

Anthropocentrism

A materialist practice of staging documents challenges anthropocentrism in the making of **documentary theatre** and performance, through investigating how all things in the creation process affect each other and the form the **presentation** takes. In this process, the material carries agency and directs the process equal to humans and their bodies.

Anthropocentrism identifies how human activity, functions, and thinking is placed

hierarchically at the centre of the world, holding the power of definition over every other sentient and non-sentient being. The relations between animate and inanimate question what aliveness is, and thus how a **document** performs. Documentary material and all other things involved in the making equally create the theatrical presentation as much as the humans involved.

Authorship

It was a very beautiful way to get to know people by working together toward something. Perhaps it worked because we had a common goal. If it had been more individual work it may have been more fights about getting your own idea across. It was a common feeling of authorship, perhaps because what we ended up presenting was never one person's idea. It had developed collectively.

(Tjønn, 2014a, my translation)

The above quotation is from a conversation with Aksel Tjønn, one of the **collaborators** in *Encountering Loss*. This research project has questioned what authorship means in the context of documentary material. Can we say that the informant or the one who first told a particular story is the author, or is it the dramaturg, dramatist or director who turns it into a scripted story who functions as author? Or is the performer who utters the words in front of an audience the author? Justine Nguyen, another of the young collaborators from *Encountering Loss*, speaks of her experience of sharing someone else's story in the following way.

I like to be able to use my own story into theatre work. Even if it is a version of my family's history, it feels good to have the possibility to use it for something. I want to use this story more in the arts. When I was on stage and retold the interview with my mother, I felt I gave her something too, a kind of understanding and acceptance. It is difficult to show when you just listen to her speaking about it, but she said

when she heard it from the stage that it felt like hearing herself, and she was touched by it. As her daughter I invested more in her story and took her history seriously, which I think meant something to her. It also means I take my own history more seriously. It was strong for her to hear me speak it on stage [...] The fact of a collective listening makes a statement or a text stronger. There are more witnesses. The story becomes public and thus strengthened as a document. It gives the document or the story a public acknowledgement.

(Nguyen, 2014, my translation)

Does authorship imply a singular person's ownership or is it simply referring to the people, places, and things, which the text connects with? If it is the latter, then authorship is a shared matter to the extent that it dissolves its own category. Michel Foucault brings to our attention the fact that the notion of authorship 'constitutes the privileged moment of individualization in the history of ideas, knowledge, literature, philosophy and the sciences' (1998: 205). Does it matter who speaks, Foucault asks (paraphrasing Samuel Beckett), continuing to question the notion of 'a work' (as for example an art-work), arguing that 'the unity that it [a work] designates is probably as problematic as the status of the author's individuality' (208). Foucault is more interested in discussing the author *function*, rather than *the* author. The former is more connected to a discourse, an assemblage of texts, and the latter to a subject. In this context the author could be any of the involved; that is the informant, the director or dramaturg, or perhaps the performer. The author function avoids ownership and individual attachment to the text. It is, as Foucault articulates, a discourse characterised by the idea of a plurality of self. He asks how the subject can appear inside the order of discourse, and he is concerned with 'depriving the subject (or its substitute) of its role as originator' (221) seeing it instead as a single variable element within a discourse.

Foucault links the author function both to juridical and institutional systems that define discourses, which is interesting in relation to how the informant of *WOE* and *Childism* described her own encounter with the juridical system. She had to write and tell her life experience in specific ways in order to make it a viable discourse inside that system. In her case, the story was being authored less by her and more by her lawyer and the system he represents. In the case of working with an anonymous informant in a **documentary theatre** project like *WOE* and *Childism*, naturally we cannot name her. However, this fact also points to her already having detached from her ‘stories’ or ‘testimonies’. She has given them away for director, dramaturg, performers, and **audience** to treat them, alter them, change them, and interpret them again and again through their ongoing relationship with the material she has offered.

Does it matter who tells a story as long as it is told? Is the testimony of ‘my’ life experience only connected to ‘my’ **body** or can it connect to other bodies and stay as ‘real’ and ‘truthful’? Foucault ends his essay ‘What is an Author?’ foreseeing a situation where written discourse (or fiction as he expresses it) would operate in a free state where there is no longer a defined author but where all discourse would ‘develop in the anonymity of a murmur’ (222). It is a world where Foucault sees less emphasis put on authenticity and originality, and instead posing questions such as: ‘What are the modes of existence of this discourse? Where has it been used, how can it circulate, and who can appropriate it for himself? What are the places in it where there is room for possible subjects? Who can assume these various subject functions’ (222)? It can be claimed, however, that in the time since Foucault wrote his text the opposite has shown to be true. Namely, that the author as subject is much emphasised, monetized and capitalized through the highly mediatized culture, circulating images and names attached to speech as much as actions. Social and political processes have become increasingly complex, and discourse can be said to be

even more thoroughly attached to the proper name. Who said what to whom and when has become a matter of intense public and private concern, scrutiny and surveillance. On the other hand, the very same complexity in social and political bureaucracy is also removing the author-subject of those working inside these systems. There is rarely any specific subject to address, nor is it readily forthcoming who takes responsibility for formulations regarding official documents, rules and regulations.

What Foucault theorized as the dispersal of the author function appears once more in the emergence of object-oriented thinking. However, the question of appropriation is different. In the case of documentary text for the stage, the matter is less about how it can be used for a number of subject functions, but more about how it can be freed from appropriation, to exist with its own agency in **relation** to subjects and other things that reciprocally affect one another. A defined subject-author seems less relevant as a point of reference if considering text as a thing, as something in relation to but separated from other things - as something in itself but entangled with other things. If humans (and other things) cannot fully understand and exhaust what a **thing** is, as is one of the main characterizations of object-oriented thinking, can an author then claim ownership to a text and to be its original source of creation? Roland Barthes writes that 'it is language which speaks, not the author' (1977a: 143). Barthes argues for the ways in which writing and writer, or *scriptor* as he calls it, constitute each other in the moment of the act of writing. They reciprocally affect one another, and presence each other as text and writer-subject (145). Barthes distinguishes between an author, who claims attachment and ownership, and writer or scriptor, who is the one carrying out the act of writing. In this context the director, dramaturg, and performers can be considered writers of the text *WOE*, *Childism* and *Encountering Loss*. The difference is that Barthes speaks from a paradigm connected to the linguistic turn where language itself is the origin of the written. Within a materialist paradigm, the written

text must be understood as an assemblage, composed and written through its relation to other things, humans, places, etc. However, it is understood as an entity of its own: separate but still entangled, connected and dependent on other things for its coming into being, things that include bodies, political decisions at the time of writing, weather, atmosphere, spaces and many other concrete things. In both cases the question of originality is put into doubt. As Barthes aims at turning the attention to the reader, or in this case the audience, rather than the author or writer, so is performing a documentary text concerned with posing questions about its origin, to whom it belongs, as well as to what meaning the text itself may produce and what other things it may give space to potentially emerge. Performing a documentary text within a materialist paradigm is about relating to it together with the audience, offering time to see and hear beyond the expected, the evident, the presumed and culturally normative.

Abuse

nightmares of fire, house burning down / wet the bed again /lonely quiet mornings / alone
/ empty fridge / run fast out of the room before the door closes and you will be safe / jump
over three stairs at a time and you will be safe / if you can count to 10 before he takes the
next breath, you will be safe / the carpet smells / stinging burning pain / belt buckle jingle
/ extreme hunger / isn't anyone going to pick me up? / Can I give you a ride home little
girl?/ I am so afraid to go home, I don't know what will be waiting for me/ throwing dirty
underwear in the trash out of shame / she made me write it 1000 times in big format paper
no dinner / really ate soap tonight before bed / the horse in my closet is evil/ always wet
feet, no good winter shoes / none of my friends allowed to come to my house / he picks me
up off the ground and shakes me upside down, to impress his friends, pins me down under
a blanket for what seems like forever, laughing / I can't breathe/ Doing homework badly
with crayons/

She makes me ask her permission to breathe / Gorillas are scary/ 100 spankings

(Anonymous, 2013)

B

Back

People ask how we can relate to a topic like child **abuse** for so long. We ask: ‘How can we turn our backs?’



(Encountering Loss, National Theatre)

Body

She has a sensation of a separation between her body and her conscious self, connected to the idea of age. She recognises her body is ageing: that the materiality of her body has been living almost 50 years and that a natural slow degeneration takes place in the material, which constitutes that body. However, she cannot relate age to her conscious self. The feeling she has of who she is does not correspond to the ageing of her body. The experience she has of her mind is outside of time; it has no age. If the body is the result of cause and effect, then it is a chemical combination of biological matter and bio-cultures.

Can the body be understood as a **thing**, or an **assemblage** of things? Coming from the tradition of material feminism, Elizabeth Grosz argues for the ways in which our specific bodies (gendered, racial, and class-specific) influence how we think and perceive the world around us, as well as how bodies are shaped literally by cultural modes of inscriptions and representation (1994). Theories of material feminism see the human body as volatile, incomplete, and lacking any final definition. As the following quotation shows, Grosz lingers between thinking the body as thing and not thing, but she stresses the fact that an animate body is different from other objects due to its interior psyche:

The body is a most peculiar “thing”, for it is never quite reducible to being merely a thing; nor does it quite manage to rise above the status of thing. Thus it is both a thing and a nonthing, an object, but an object which somehow contains or coexists with an interiority [...] If bodies are objects or things, they are like no others, for they are the centres of perspective, insight, reflection desire, agency.

(Grosz, 1994:xi)

Theories of embodiment have made an important step towards the present renewed interest in materiality. The materialism of the body, within this context, is to see the body as an assemblage of various forms of materiality connected and relating to all other things also made from the same, or similar, forms of matter. This is not a holistic position, but a relational one. ‘In a world of vibrant matter, it is not enough to say that we are “embodied”. We are, rather, *an array of bodies*, many different kinds of them in a nested set of microbiomes’ (Bennett, 2010: 112).

Many thinkers who associate themselves with new materialism are affiliated with phenomenology and feminism. Thus one of the agendas is a renewed focus on the body and its role in politics. Bodies are to a large extent understood as assemblages of matter and cultures of biological life, and thus as open, complex systems with porous boundaries,

which are shaped by other things as much as they shape things. For example, the fact that the human skin is perforated links our human biology to things around us through the senses, affecting our material and social conditions. Discussing how orientation toward things matter, referring to Husserl, Marx and Heidegger, Sara Ahmed writes: ‘bodies as well as objects take shape through being orientated toward each other, an orientation that may be experienced as the cohabitation or sharing of space’ (Ahmed, 2010: 245). New materialism argues for a gap or a distance, not between body and mind, but between body as material and the ‘self’ or the ‘subject’ as an *idea* of the mind. Intersubjectivity is challenged to not only involve relations between the self and the other but between bodies of all kinds, animate and inanimate. Object-oriented philosophy questions the **anthropocentric** notion that mind and thinking give humans a privileged position over other entities. It is no longer solely our physical experience and encounter with the other that forms our subjectified bodily experience, but also that all the other things that surround us, near or far, affect the ways we think, the ways our bodies function, and thus our feeling of who we are. In fact it questions if we can speak of a subject or an ‘I’ at all. Do we own our bodies or are we inhabited by several material cultures, such as bacteria cultures that affect and control our thinking, moods, and behaviour?

When dealing with traumatic material in documentary works there is always an aspect of violation involved. The subjected body has been violated, and any retelling of that event represents a framing, which is violent because it attempts to capture something that transgresses socially accepted norms of expression. It could be said that the experience itself comes under a form of violation because a retelling will inevitably omit aspects of what happened. Trauma theory teaches us how that which is silenced, unknown, and unspeakable constitutes the largest part of the trauma. What are the ethical implications if there is no subject ‘I’ but only a material body with feelings, thoughts, and desires passing

through it? Is the body reified to the extent that we have no control over it? If so, what is an assault? The lack of an 'I' calls us to question how we approach responsibility. To be violated solidifies the 'I' as much as the 'I' is solidified in the one who violates. Rosi Braidotti calls for affirmative ethics that 'desire to endure in time and thus clashes with the deadly spin of the present' (Braidotti, 2010: 215). The ethics between things in relation demands a shared vulnerability that looks to the future. It is a position that cares for sustainability over time, taking the consequences of actions over time into consideration. If experiencing the body is experienced as part of a materialist lineage that will continue into the future, knowing that actions of violation will affect the future bodies of both violator and victim, it becomes intensely difficult to violate another because we live in relation, connected and entangled. Any action of violence will eventually affect the course of things. This is how the notion of karma works in **Buddhism**, and the reason why meditation as a practice of non-action is a time to not affect the course of things. Perhaps we *have* a body rather than owning one. This makes us increasingly vulnerable, dependent on each other and calls for acts of caring both of the subjective body and other bodies. A body appears as a causal effect of many encounters. As such each body presented is an utterly magical event.

Breathing

Breathing is a sign of life, although not all life forms breathe. For life forms that do breathe, we can say that breathing is a connective activity. We all share the same air. We breathe it into our body, it circulates, and we breathe it out. Later someone else breathes in some of the same air (additionally a couple of trees has benefited and added along the way). When working with documentary material in this research, performers have been asked to take deep breaths at random places in the text. They have been asked to avoid this specific breathing at natural places such as commas and at the end of a sentence, but rather

to breath deeply at places that feel unnatural for such an interruption. The deep breathing moves the **body** in different ways; it circulates energy thus also stirring emotional reactions, which often makes the performer feel vulnerable because sometimes they come as a surprise. Deep breathing is a gap and a moment to halt that opens up a space for sensing, relating, and reflecting in a movement between the outer and the inner worlds. The breath is a moment that offers time to listen to the **words** that have been uttered, both for audiences and the performer herself. Consequently, it also opens up for new constructions of meaning. When taking a deep breath randomly the performer can surprise herself, because through the **listening** into that moment, unexpected thoughts, emotions, and physical reactions may occur. The point of using this kind of breathing is to relate and react physically (energetically) in the moment, to what the text contains, creating space and **time** for it to unfold. This way of working with breathing brings out aspects of the inarticulate in a text, which is one way of ‘getting the now into the text’ (Turner & Behrndt, 2008: 190). These spaces of listening are particularly important in the process of relating to documentary material, because they represent an ethical call to the absent things that are entangled into the given text. It is in those spaces of listening between the words that the text can reveal some of its hidden complexities and echo back both to the performer speaking and the audience receiving.

Be myself

To be myself is an expression often referred to in contemporary performance making. It has been used many times as a figuration expressing ways of performing opposed to the idea of pretending to be a character or even just identifying with experiences foreign to the **actor**. The idea that you are *not* yourself when acting is a common idea. This is how some of the young performers in *Encountering Loss* expressed how they felt about what they were doing on stage.

It has been a good experience to be myself in front of the audience, not to pretend, and to read texts that actually reflects real experiences.

(Aasheim, 2014, my translation)

The dialogue with the audience was interesting because the form was very down to earth, a kind of stripped down aesthetics. I have never felt so close to an audience because I did not wear the mask of a character, but felt that I exposed myself. Even when we sat with our backs to them and watched a projected film with them, we were together. We were also audience members at that moment.

(Nguyen, 2014, my translation)

I have explored theatre and grief, and I am thankful for that possibility [...] I like to speak to people so this was simply a different forum to do the same thing. But the form was not to be good at acting; I was simply asked to stand in front of an audience and speak about things. When we speak to and interact with the audience it matters who are in the space with us.

(Tjønn, 2014a, my translation)

Within object-oriented philosophies both concepts ‘being’ and ‘self’ are questioned. The question of what has life and thus being is problematized when seeing all matter as vibrant (Bennett, 2010). Notions of subjectivity and self are also questioned in the wake of the perspective of seeing all things, sentient and non-sentient, as related and entangled. **New materialism** is an ontological reorientation, which can be labelled ‘posthumanist’, conceiving of matter as representing life as much as humans and animals. It emphasises ‘the productivity and resilience of matter’, thus breaking down the separation between sentient and non-sentient beings (Coole & Frost, 2010: 7). This leads to a questioning of power distribution related to the status of life and the human, and to an exploration of the

relationships between material things in everyday life and broader geopolitical and socioeconomic structures. New materialists see matter as something with its own agency operating with or without the interference of humans, capable of self-transformation, self-organization, and directedness. Matter is not solid, reliable, and stable, it is constantly forming and reforming itself unexpectedly. Rosi Braidotti has been concerned with reconsidering the concept of subjectivity with 'life forces' or what she names the politics of *life itself*. She is speaking of 'nomadic subjectivity' as a position inhabiting the peripheral and 'outside' positions to the normative subject and ego position, where the life force of our material and animal bodies, *zoe*, lies beyond the control of logos and human will. Within this nomadic concept is the idea of a constant active becoming **thing**, animal, insect etc., gearing toward death as yet another stage of existence and transformation. 'The subject is an autopoietic machine, fuelled by targeted perceptions, and it functions as the echoing chamber of *zoe* [...] This is just one life, not *my* life. The life in "me" does not answer to my name: "I" is just passing (Braidotti, 2010: 210).

Taking these perspectives into consideration the concept of being oneself on stage, or not being oneself as in being a character, becomes complex and contradictory. In a sense, there is no self to be just as there is no character to be either. However, the autopoietic machine of becoming that Braidotti speaks of is represented and perceived by the audience through performing as an entity, a self, and an identity. Is it possible to see and experience the nomadic **body** in representation? The idea of performing a character as well as being oneself depends on fixed subject formations: the performer and the character. Either you relate to both or you relate only to the subject of the performer who is presumed to be able to 'be herself' on stage. To avoid this dichotomy implies an understanding of the performing body, the spectating body, the text and everything else as things that affect and

shape each other reciprocally. This includes such things as feelings of anxiety, attraction, desire etc., which are equally presented through **relation**, none of them true or false.

To be able to see and experience this complexity takes practice. Our Western culture is so deeply engaged in the belief of the self and the body as belonging to - and controlled by - an 'I' structure that we constantly try to realise and confirm as if it was threatened to dissolve or disappear. Most often we mistake feelings and sensations to be constitutive of who we are, instead of letting them happen, take place, and transform. Perhaps the relation between things is all that takes place, is performed, and lived on stage: an unfolding of the autopoietic machine of becoming challenging conceptions of both professionalism and amateur. If life is indeed something just passing through the materiality I call my body, this influences acting and performance to the extent that what is presented to an audience is the vitality of flesh, sounds forming into words, emotions and energies passing between bodies, different identity and character images flickering through the space but never staying; materials grouping together forming new and different structures for each body watching and for each actor performing. There is no being oneself nor being a character, there are only things sharing time and space, constantly transforming as a consequence of 'life itself'. However, humans have language, a system of imagery that is constantly triggered by sense experiences, which will always take what we see and experience into a world of symbols and meaning, blurring our conception of **reality** as material.

I want to test the hypothesis that the emphasis on life itself has some positive sides because it focuses with greater accuracy on the complexities of contemporary technologically mediated bodies and on social practices of human embodiment.

This marks a shift away from anthropomorphism, in favour of a new emphasis on the mutual interdependence of material, biocultural, and symbolic forces in the making of social and political practices. The focus on life itself may encourage a

sort of biocentered egalitarianism, forcing a reconsideration of the concept of subjectivity in terms of ‘life forces’. It dislocates but also redefines the relationship between self and other by shifting the axes of genderization, racialization, and naturalization away from a binary opposition into a more complex and less oppositional mode of interaction.

(Braidotti, 2010: 203-204)

Buddhism

Occasionally there are references to Tibetan and Zen Buddhism in sections of this **encyclopaedia**, and especially the Mahamudra and Dzogchen traditions. The references draw on sources such as Thich Nhât Hanh (2012), Khenpo Tsültrim Gyamtso (2003), Traleg Kyabgon (2003), Pema Chödrön (2002) and Chögyam Trungpa (1999) although not always explicitly. Tibetan Buddhism regards itself as a philosophy and a science of the mind based on meditation practice, reading, analyses, and debates. This praxis is used to realize what Dzogchen and Mahamudra call *rigpa*, the realization of the non-dual reality beyond the conceptualization of the mind. This is what is known as the Buddhist concept of emptiness. ‘[T]he true nature of reality is beyond something and nothing. Something and nothing are only dependently existent’ (Gyamtso, 2003: 94). The goal of the praxis is to ‘exhaust conceptual mind’ (Morton, 2015: 191); however, with the dual and conceptual language as a tool for examining its own construction of **reality**. Buddhist thinking has obvious parallels with the striving of object-oriented philosophy toward transcendence of the object-subject divide. The idea of how things appear as illusory effects of causation is what Morton calls ‘realist magic’ (2013), and Gyamtso speaks of as ‘dependently arisen mere appearance’ (2003: 97). Quantum physics, object-oriented philosophies, and Buddhist philosophies all point to the fact that all things are made from particles, eventually dissolving into nothingness. They also all agree that matter is not stable but in constant movement and transformation, which leads to acknowledging that there is no

essential knowledge, and that we have to work with not knowing. Buddhism has come to the realization of a non-dual awareness: emptiness in union with luminosity, or an absolute that is neither something nor nothing. From this absolute nature of things, the radiant source, everything appears and is connected. How things connect is an aspect still discussed in object-oriented ontology (**OOO**). Some argue for the ways in which everything is connected, while others speak of things as separate but still affecting each other's coming into being through some kind of medium labeled for instance 'ether' (Harman), 'the rift' (Morton) or 'A Life' (Deleuze). Buddhist practice of meditation and what is called 'view' (conduct), which is how the philosophy influences our world-view and thus the ways in which we act and react in the world, have also influenced the practical work in the rehearsal studios of this PaR project together with other **collaborators**.

“Bombs in the Head”

Amé: During the war I planted bombs.

Simone: The bomb I want to plant is worse than the worst bomb that ever exploded in this country.

Amé: We'll plant them in buses, in restaurants...

Simone: No, no, this bomb can only explode in a single place. In people's minds.

Amé: What do you mean?

Simone: We'll go tell stories. Everything they want to make us forget, we'll invent, we'll say it! They'll be forced to smash our heads in!

(Mouawad, 2011: 84)

C

Collaborators

In this research project there have been many collaborators. To begin with, the seven young people who took part in *Encountering Loss* were called participants. They were seen as participants in workshops where they would benefit from new knowledge and

experience. This became a way to justify the fact that they were not paid, and that they were chosen from a hierarchical selection process consisting of applications and interviews. However, it became evident as the work proceeded that they were not only participating through the fact of sharing the process and performing the tasks they were given, but they were also collaborating by offering ideas and contributing to the form of the work and what was presented to the audience at the end of each workshop.

Collaborators seem to have more shared ownership and agency in relation to what is developed, and perhaps also a higher status than participants. A participant is to a greater extent led through a process, while the collaborator instigates and contributes to the work and the process. When asked by an **audience** member about their relation to the two project leaders in the second presentation, Helene said she felt we had been a group of nine people working together, not seven participants and two leaders. This realisation has also led to the conclusion that in any future collaboration, everyone has to be paid, no matter if they are professionals or so-called amateurs.

In *WOE* the research-dramaturg performed the role of a collaborator with director Edit Kaldor who was the one leading the work. There was an established hierarchy where the director was head of the process and had the strongest ownership to it. The three young people on stage were performers.

In *Childism*, the **dancer** and **actor** are performers. However, they are also collaborators. In this case the research-dramaturg initiated and lead the work to a certain extent. However, there was no director involved. A dramaturg is to a large extent used to collaborating with a director or a choreographer or any other leader of a process. The work of a dramaturg is usually based on **conversations** and exchanges with another person who is not going to be on stage performing the material. The process of *Childism* taught us how much of

dramaturgical work depends on this kind of collaborative dialogue. When the director function was missing in *Childism* Henriette and Petra had to become more involved in the process as collaborators and performers. This also resulted in the dramaturg performing as well, which made her lose a certain sense of freedom in relation to the dramaturgical labour. When performing, the dramaturg had to deal with levels of self-consciousness otherwise less prevalent in her work. This situation raises questions of how to perform **dramaturgy** and where the boundaries of a dramaturg lie. Is a performing dramaturg still able to do the work of a dramaturg? The three of us developed the script together based on the various **documents** and recorded material at hand. We discussed in depth the dramaturgy, the spatial arrangements, and how to involve the **audience** in a conversation around the topic of child **abuse**. In this situation where the traditional leader figure of the working process, the director or choreographer, was absent our distinctive roles seemed to disintegrate. We all became performers, dramaturges and directors. What took place in both *Encountering Loss* and *Childism* is what Antônio Araújo describes when discussing dramaturgy from the collective group:

In the collaborative process, precisely, the different authors – or authorships – are not added together, but cohabit the work. The different individual writings are maintained there, identifiable, and the whole is not formed by its synthesis but by its dialogue and friction.

(Araújo, 2011: 235)

To a large degree, these two projects became a process of collectively and collaboratively performing the dramaturgical labour shaping the form eventually presented to an audience.

Commitment

When the professional **dancer** Henriette Slorer and **actor** Petra Fransson moved from simply being performers in someone else's project to becoming **collaborators**, it was a

necessary step towards deeper involvement into the material. When treating documentary material within the format that this research proposes, it matters that everyone has opinions, emotions and reflections about why we were all presenting the material in the form we do. It was important to draw Slorer and Fransson closer in as collaborators, because this work depends on them not just treating it as a performing 'job'. We all needed to commit and care for the material in ways that could make it manifest and be free to move and vibrate. What kind of care are we talking about here? It is not the care of a nurse or a mother. It is not the kind of care aimed for healing. What the material in this case was calling for was an encounter: For the performers and dramaturgs to spend time with it, relating to it by confronting ourselves with what it created in and with us. This demands a will and courage on the side of the performers to meet the material with various approaches: testing different masks in order to be able to transform and shape unexpected things together. There were disagreements about how this could be done: through repetition and precision, controlling the physical and vocal expression at each moment in order to ensure personal **ethics**, or through not repeating or rehearsing and rather focusing on **listening** to the **unknown** in the moments of performance as a way to allow each thing to perform and transform in the encounters with other things present. This is a question of different kinds of ethics.

The philosopher Knud Eljer Løgstrup argues for an ethics of trust where one should give of oneself. To offer trust or to be given trust is an ethical demand (Løgstrup, 1997). In our case the informant has trusted us when she has let us use her stories about her past experiences. The documentary material that is a result of this trust, also gives itself to us to treat it, speak it, move it, and breathe it in front of an **audience**. The ethical demand Løgstrup writes about is radical because it originates in the belief that we are all given life. It is this premise that also makes us responsible for the life of the other and the ways in

which our lives affect each other. The radical demand ‘is an unspoken, so to say anonymous demand on us to take care of the life that trust lays in our hands’ (Løgstrup, 1991: 40). This fact creates a radical ethical demand to help the other realise her or his life potential, which does not mean to necessarily follow the wish of the other. Sometimes it may be to act contrary to the needs that the other person (or **thing**) expresses. It is a challenging task that usually confronts performers dealing with documentary material. Løgstrup is speaking of the relationship between humans, but when considering human bodies as things one could also invite other things into his ethics of trust, such as for instance a text or a recording of a witness’ story. How much freedom of **interpretation** and in shaping the material can artists allow themselves? The commitment of the collaborators is needed in order to be able to offer trust and caring for the material, making everyone involved responsible for realising its potential. How can we act ethically as professionals? Does ethics demand of us to invest more of ourselves, also revealing our ‘unprofessional’ sides?

Løgstrup emphasises that ethics is not about trying to please or to be obedient to the wish or needs of the other. This would be to counteract the ethical demand, because ‘every attempt at being obedient consists of a will to sovereignty, which the demand goes against [...] In other words, what is demanded is that the demand should not be necessary. This is what makes it radical’ (1991: 173). If both parties believe they have been given life, then both will be responsible for the life of the other – and therein lie a mutual trust (of being under the same conditions). The notion of having been *given* life is a religious or familial (biological) one. In a materialist translation of Løgstrup it would simply be to *have* life or that life *has* us or vibrates *through* us. The ethics does not stem from a profound feeling of gratitude, but from Braidotti’s notion of sustainability and endurance as a shared condition. This condition forms the base for an ethos and is opposed to the demand of reciprocity,

meaning that what is done expects a 'giving back'. In what Løgstrup calls 'natural love' there is no notion of reciprocity, the life of both becomes happy through the same action of caring because the other is loved. 'Love is, because it deals with the other self, a movement towards the other. That is its nature' (155). So, natural love is neither selfish nor unselfish; it is movement.

Is commitment about love, or perhaps rather about time? In his article 'Curating with Love, or a Plea for Inflexibility' Pascal Gielen writes about the visual arts market as a 'network society' where relationships and solidarity last only through the current project, and artists and curators are often focussing on their next project, not being present with the process actually taking place. This culture creates what he calls 'goal-driven relationships'. The participant (artist, curator, producer and so on) 'fails to notice the rhythm of his immediate environment and the people with whom he works. It turns him into a pilgrim, always in search of a future elsewhere, of another new, perhaps better and more ambitious artistic project' (2010: 21). Gielen speaks out for inflexibility and deep love, which in his words 'exists outside the logic of calculation, but in terms of intention [it] is absolute and endless' (23). Tenderness and care could be added (those are terms explored by Silvia Benso, which will be addressed under 'T') as parameters for deep love, which need time, stability, and certain kind of listening to unfold. Gielen asks what it would mean 'if one truly claims a desire to make a different world? How much time would one need to do that? Perhaps rather more than today's neoliberalism prescribes for the average artistic project?' (24). Can artists grow along with their informants? Can they grow old together? What would it imply economically to risk becoming outdated? Gielen connects his argument to the discourse about site-specific, locational and relational art practices, and asks who would want to receive a declaration of love due to his or her belonging to a specific community, race, nationality or disability? Any relationship needs to focus on

specific relations in specific situations, even if they are numerous, if it is to be called a loving or tender relationship. The relationship developed with the informant of *WOE* and *Childism* was specific and unfolded over the span of several years. The development of those two performance projects grew out of this relationship, rather than the opposite. We did not look for a specific informant to serve a theme for a performance. The work is a thing that is shaped from relations already taking place. It is not one agent that pushes, shapes, or controls its 'presencing' more than any of the other things. They happen to cross each other's paths and connect and disconnect in their movements.

Compassion

Encountering Loss was a process that surprisingly taught us something about compassion. By looking at a topic like loss from all different angles, exploring small losses and bigger losses, we learned that personal loss is connected to a common feeling of loss. The feeling of loss is the same if you loose a key, a king, or your beloved kitten. The strength in the feeling varies; it is less intense when losing a key and much more intense if losing a loved one. In **conversations** with audience members after the second presentation, the power of the connection between texts from the play *Tideline* with personal experiences of loss were emphasized. The way the performers connected experiences of war outlined in the play with their own experience and could share it with others, were occasions where compassion could arise within the performers as well as the **audience**. Compassion is when you understand what the emotion of the other contains because you have felt it yourself. Compassion is the result of having experienced **reality** as it is, free from conceptualisation and attachments, having the knowledge of how any feeling or phenomena is empty of any essence and thus full of every potential.

“The most important thing for me” says Justine, “is that you often think you are alone with your losses, but to discover that loss is a common experience and something that all humans share.” “You are dealing with really big issues”, says someone in the audience. “Yes,” says Aurora, “but we have learned that something like loss exists on different levels simultaneously. It is when we discover the relation between the small incident of loss and the global or national experiences of loss like an earthquake, war, a terrorist attack or whatever, that we see how we are all connected.”

(Encountering Loss, 2013b, my translation)

Meditation practices teach us that compassion is to understand the feeling of the other without sentimentally going into that feeling, which would be mimicry. It is rather about recognizing and knowing what that feeling is, and also how every emotion and every state will always pass and transform. Understanding happens on many levels: it happens intellectually, through comprehension and experience, and as realised knowledge—that is, knowledge that has manifested in our entire being and makes us act instinctively different. Compassion is not only a feeling of empathy, but also a realisation that leads to action or consciously refraining from action. This is how a method of working with documentary material where the personal experience is seen in the light of larger cultural and societal structures may become an ethical practice. In Buddhist teachings, compassion is ultimately about a deep wish to free people from the reasons for suffering, which are fabrications and ideas of isolation and separation. This can be achieved through working on awakening compassion in oneself demonstrating to others a way of living that compassionately feels but does not identify or attach to that feeling, acknowledging that we are not isolated but in constant **relation**. Compassion is to be willing to share an emotion through feeling it in the depth of your own being, without getting lost in your own sentimentality. You cannot relieve the suffering or pain of the other; you can only witness it and share that common

condition of life, acting in ways that help to realise that staying with what is without attachment will eventually release the pain and lead to transformation. The feeling passes through you but does not belong to you or define who you are.

Compassion is not a relationship between the healer and the wounded. It's a relationship between equals. Only when we know our own darkness well can we be present with the darkness of others. Compassion becomes real when we recognize our shared humanity.

(Chödrön, 2002: 73)

The traumatised subject has been wounded physically, emotionally and spiritually. The performative events of this research project, based on stories of trauma, do not aspire to be practices of healing, but are rather moments for nurturing compassion through **listening** to the **voice** of witness that is heard through the exposure of the wound. Cathy Caruth writes: 'It is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available' (1996: 4). In much healing practice there is an emphasis on the need to reclaim and 'own' the wound in order to heal it. From the perspective of a materialist approach to documentary material, questioning if we own our stories and in fact our bodies, it may be more adequate to speak of the importance of knowing, and letting others **know**, as a way of healing. In the dance piece *Everything Remains* (2015), the performer Juli Apponen exposes her **body** that has gone through several operations in a process of transitioning from male to female. She explains how seeing her body as an object and an image has been liberating. In an interview in the Danish newspaper *Information*, her collaborator in the piece, Jon R. Skulberg, suggests the piece is less about transgender and gender identity, but rather about common human experiences of pain, exhaustion, and limitation. In the interview they differentiate between feelings of pity for someone, which establishes an unfortunate power relation as opposed to 'when one connects, feeling with, and the body reacts' (Nikolajsen, 2015, my

translation). The two artists identify the experience as empathy, which could turn into compassion when understood at a level of knowledge that changes the individual conduct when encountering other bodies in pain. Here ‘knowing’ is referred to as a continuous process of relating to respecting the fact that we can never fully know a thing: it can never be fully revealed to us as reality. Therefore, ‘knowing’ always implies an **unknown**. To know a traumatic wound would mean to live in a life long relation to it also experiencing how the emotions connected to the phenomenological event will transform and change.

Childism

Transcript from a recording of a conversation between Karmenlara Ely, Petra Fransson, and Camilla Eeg-Tverbakk, 25th June 2014.

K.E: Elisabeth Young-Bruhel has written in her book called Childism (2012) that the way we objectify children is a social problem. It is the cause and the symptom of all these [abusive] behaviours and situations.

C.E: We think we own our children.

K.E: We treat them as negative extensions of our ego. They have a lower social status. Elisabeth told me once that a child is the only person in the world who can never be its own advocate in a social situation ever, unless it is manufactured, and then it is temporary. They don't have representation anywhere. People speak for them.

P.F: I think childism is a good headline for this work, because it is specific in a way, and because it is not commonly known there is also something in it like “what is this?” and you know, something that triggers. To go into the concept of childism can open up related topics of sexism and racism.

K.E: She [Elisabeth Young-Bruehl] had a famous book called The Anatomy of Prejudices (1996), and her argument there was looking at racism and sexism as a symptom of social narcissism. Like severe pathological narcissism in society. Childism is her sequel to that

argument in a way. It connects to your research in a way [Camilla Eeg-Tverbakk] where you separate the thing from the object: It is not mine, I don't know it, I don't control it. I have to relate to them; she, he, person, thing.

(Eeg-Tverbakk, Ely & Fransson, 2014)

Conversations

The dramaturg is first and foremost a conversationalist. Conversation manifests a form of discourse that is within and partly about the present context of encounter; an intensely social and provisional affair that is not subject to closure.

(Heathfield, 2011: 111)

The practice as a dramaturg during this research is based on presence in the rehearsal space focusing on conversations as a tool and an approach to aesthetics and collaboration, which is informed by a sense of **listening**, seeing, and feeling. It is a practice of watching and thinking (sometimes out loud), which 'demand extensive emotional and sensory attention' (Heathfield 2011: 112). Here, conversation implies various ways of interacting (verbally, physically, through visuals and audio pieces). By referring to the senses in rehearsals there is an investment in working with **rhythm** to create meaning, exchange, and dialogue between the collaborating artists, as well as between the artistic material and the spectator. Conversations that are generated throughout the process can be considered as the artistic material of the dramaturg. They influence the work profoundly by being the form in which a process of questioning and articulating the relationships between all the artistic materials happens. Conversation as dramaturgical material and method is a way to give time to the sense-related process of listening to things that takes place in rehearsal, keeping in mind that conversation is not only verbal exchange but also short and long moments of silence, watching, or moving around together. Against the background of how the collaborative work unfolded in *Childism*, perhaps the material itself became the director or the leader of

the process and we were all dramaturgs in deep conversation with it. In any creation there is a choice of what has a place inside and what falls outside the form. With the conversational mode of listening that this research proposes, there is at best a reciprocal exchange between the human collaborators and the material equally shaping the presentation. The dramaturg, **dancer** and **actor** working in *Childism* chose to include text material, choreographic material, objects, images, and sounds based on intellectual, sensory, and emotional grounds. However, there was also a sense to the ways in which certain sequences of material seemed to render themselves present repeatedly, insisting on becoming part of the public presentation, while other things drifted out and disappeared. This work of listening and conversing with all things linked to the process demands working with uncertainty, with risk, and with only partly knowing and understanding what the work looks like and communicates. It means to attempt to serve the material and follow the energetic exchange between all things involved – animate and inanimate.

A voice from the audience is heard:

“What is the most important thing you have learned from this process?”

Nel Ewa takes the word:

“I think what has taught me the most is the conversations with the other participants and to learn to collaborate with a group of different people, all with strong opinions”.

Thomas who is the most experienced with performing from before adds that for him to learn to create collectively has been new and interesting.

“We have all brought in material,” he says. “Things we like taken from anywhere really. Then we have mixed it all together, and that has been really interesting to see how that can work.”

Helene who studies acting in a preparatory school, adds that focussing on process rather than product has instigated other kinds of conversations, which would have been very different if they had been more concerned with an end product.

“It has been great to use the stage as a platform to say what you really think about things. And the fact that we have been taken very seriously as a group of youth has been important. I discovered that everyone had something to contribute with if we

had experienced great loss or not. Whatever was brought to the table was taken seriously and supported as a potential thing that added something to the picture. I liked that.”

(Encountering Loss, 2013b, my translation)

Encountering Loss and *Childism* both incorporate a conversation with the audience into the presentations. These conversations play an important part of the dialogue around the topic, and represent a place where the audience takes part in forming the work, influencing presentations that will follow in the future. The wish to engage the audience in conversation is a complicated and complex matter. Is the conversation meant to serve the dramaturgy of the material? Is it to share stories of abuse or loss as a therapeutic space? Or is it a social space for discussing how our society deals with loss or abuse? How can the audience navigate the space that is opened up for conversation? How much should the dramaturg or artists direct the conversation? How do we stage and steer such public conversations? Obviously there are certain rules and rituals connected to conversations in the parliament or the courtroom. But what are the rituals of conversation with an audience in the theatre? In this project, conversations with audiences have happened after the artists have presented the material. The choice has been to open up the space without giving any directions to what should or should not be raised. We wanted to let the audience **voice** whatever they felt needed to be voiced. This may be experienced as both having permission for and being given a demand to speak, and it poses the question back to the dramaturg of who takes responsibility for the situation. The audiences we presented to in this case were mainly a theatre audience with special interests either in the collaborators (family, friends, and colleagues) or in the form (documentary theatre), which represented an audience prepared to face the topics of loss or abuse. If performing *Childism* for high school students or students from educations within health care and social work, we would need someone with competence from those fields and arenas to lead the conversations.

The flow of **words** in verbal conversations offer time to stay in **proximity** with other present bodies, to smell them, to feel their energies, their material structure, to hear the sounds they produce that are not yet formulated as logical linguistic structures. Somehow conversation is a method to listen and see beyond the most immediate structures; it is a way to be together sharing **time** and space. Gilles Deleuze defines conversation as an outline of becoming, transcending binary machines. It is not about imitation or the future, nor about the past. It is a process of something taking shape and changing in the present. Deleuze points out that as we turn in circles discussing a topic or a question ‘there are becomings which are silently at work which are almost imperceptible’ (Deleuze & Parnet 1987: 2). The spaces that conversation offers are those of spending time together, feeling and sensing the creative process. The actual words occasionally directly instigate creation and materialization. However, most often they float as soundscapes slowly formulating concepts in transit, where there is nothing to understand and nothing to interpret (4). Conversation is a way to relate and to encounter people, ideas, movements, events, and other things. Therefore conversation was also brought on stage in the performance projects forming this research: ‘I was happy I could bring conversations about politics on stage. You can feel people’s reactions’ (Tjønn, 2014a, my translation).

The following are images taken during the first two workshops of *Encountering Loss*. The last image in this series represents a silent conversation.





D

Dancer

A dancer is a playful character. It is someone who moves in front of an **audience**. He or she moves with energy, with fragility, with power, with emotions, with thoughts. A dancer is a performer, someone who expresses life itself in motion and transformation, sometimes

with **words** and always with a **body** present. A dancer is someone who is engaged in a living relationship with other **things**: thoughts, sensations, muscles, skin, breath, fellow performers, props and objects, costumes, spaces, beats, **rhythms** and timeframes. In **documentary theatre** and performance, the focus is usually on the verbal **documents**, oral testimonies and recounts of past events. In *Childism* a dancer was engaged to relate to the documentary material through her trained body. This was a response to the ethical call of the material, which needed ways to express what could not be verbally recounted for. As trauma theory tells us, there are always places in an experience that are **withdrawn** from conscious **memory**, but which are extremely present through sensory memory, and the ways the experience has become a part of the individual's sense of being in the world. We wanted to research into how the trained dancer's body would encounter and process the material differently from the **actor** working with articulated words and images. The dancer's receptive apparatus is finely tuned, and with **time** the material found ways to transform into things through the encounter between the body of the words and texts available, and the body of the dancer herself. The things that were shaped by the dancer's body belonged neither to her nor to the informant. They were new things expressed through physical shapes and words. As the dancer was moving she spoke of how and where the words and images of the documentary material hit her body. How it blended and slowly sipped into her body and became a part of it. The dancer spoke about her physical reception of these stories and images, the sensations in her own body, and how they moved her body and made her feel. She expressed how she wanted to get rid of this information, but how it was impossible when she had learned about it. She expressed the pain and frustration of knowing and how that affects the body and its behaviour. The dancer's physical response was recognisable to the informant, who similarly wishes she could get rid of her own images and sensorial memories, but is unable to do so. They have become part of her body and who she is. Perhaps we resist moving into encounters with traumatic

material because we want to avoid them becoming part of our system, because we know they will stay somehow? When we do spend time in **relation** with those difficult stories and experiences however, it is possible that we find **compassion**.

Dialogue on Email About Dramaturgy related to *Childism*

Dear Henriette and Petra

I want to share some thoughts I have after our last meeting in January.

- I am interested in a combination of rehearsed material with parts that are basically just read with a distance. The rehearsing of a material is about being in an ongoing relationship with the material.
- I imagine using projections, images of our own childhood. I wonder if we should use the video that was posted on Facebook of the 9-year-old boy who is held down to the ground by policemen in Malmö?
- The use of things and materials on stage: plastic bags, sewing material, threads etc. I thought of what kind of material I would use to represent my own childhood, and I think it is materials to sew from, in all kinds of patterns and colours, both because I used to sew clothes for my Barbie dolls and because my mother used to sew clothes for me. What material would you bring? Something you think of in relation to your own childhood, and of which we can have a lot on stage.
- How to establish the right atmosphere with the audience from the beginning, which can open up for a dialogue with them after the presentation? It may happen by being down to earth about how the material is presented in the beginning, that we are occupied with some kind of activity on stage that is obviously not virtuosic. That our focus is not on the audience, but opens up for a relaxed attitude where they can also chat together. And then build the presentation to a more fixed structure, which can reciprocally build and dissolve throughout.
- Can we encounter this material both as professionals and as fellow human beings? What does that mean and what is the difference? Tim Etchells from Forced Entertainment writes in the book *Certain Fragments* about investment, and I find his formulations interesting: "Investment is what happens when the performers before us seem bound up unspeakably with what they're doing – it seems to matter to them, it appears to hurt them or threatens to pleasure them, it seems to touch them, in some quiet and terrible way...Investment is the line of

connection...investment draws us in. Something is happening – real and therefore risked – something seems to slip across from the private world to the public one – and the performers are ‘left open’ or ‘left exposed’...Investment links to passion, politics and rage...Investment comes when we’re beaten so complex and so personal that we move beyond rhetoric into events. Investment forces us to know that performative actions have real consequences beyond the performative arena.”

- The documentary material and the presentation are both precarious; that is, they are constructions that need time and space to grow into visibility and be ‘heard’. The time aspect is important. I often speak about “to be hanging out with the material”. That is something we do throughout the process, but how can we do it together with the audience?
- As you probably know, I am concerned with the fragmentary structure where there does not need to be any logical understanding of why something is placed next to something else. Each thing speaks for itself, and it is not always that we can grasp its meaning. Thus it becomes less important what is placed next to each other. I am interested in a certain level of “chance”, where we risk a seemingly random order of things. This is connected to the idea that each thing, text part or movement part, is something in and of itself, which we can never fully understand. The things have their own relations between them, which we are also a part of but which we cannot control fully. No matter what dramaturgy we end up with, there will be an aspect of chance. It could always have been different, and it will find its shape at the specific moment in time when it is presented. That is why I want to let go of the idea of “what we want to say” and rather focus on what the material wants to say. It may come across as a hopeless task, but it is a departure point. We are anyhow going to be part of it and make the choices we think are best.

I have thought of many other things as well but I am not able to formulate them now. Perhaps I will send you another email during the spring. I look forward to continue working with you and am starting to get nervous for the presentation Saturday November 14th.

Happy Easter
Camilla

(Eeg-Tverbakk, 2015, my translation)

Hi Camilla and Petra:)

There are many exciting and challenging thoughts here Camilla. Nice to hear from you in this way in order to understand a little bit of where you are in relation to the material.

The idea of letting the material speak or tell what it wishes is a good challenge, but also very demanding. To me the challenge lies mainly in the continuous questioning, hanging out with and alongside the material at the same time as having a direction and take a position in relation to what we do. This is a balancing which to me lies inherent in art, but which with this material still is unknown... Hm, I have to reflect on it...

I like Tim Etchells' formulations very much. Simultaneously they are somewhat contrasting the idea of letting the material speak for itself...or? We are researching new forms of expression, and it is perhaps between the worked through and rehearsed, and the spontaneous, unprepared, and free that we can find something interesting. I think that the liberated more easily can occur if one dares to depart from a clear starting point. A clear frame, form, or dramaturgy.

To me the material from childhood would be lots of sports equipment of all sorts. I remember our garage full of toys in all shapes. But we don't have anything of this left after my father died and my mom moved into an apartment. It can possibly be found at secondhand stores. I have quite a lot of pictures and albums. They can easily be digitized. Perhaps images could be projected onto plastic bags?

Looking forward to work together again.

Hugs, Henriette

(Slorer, 2015, my translation)

Dramaturgy

(The following presents a specific voice, *she*, and her experience as a dramaturg in this research project.)

The dramaturg would be the one whose interest lies in the bringing forward of the implicit force of any given articulation. Here dramaturgy comes closer to the

function of the analysand in psychoanalysis or the witness in history, or the midwife at the birth. The dramaturg knows that there is no ownership of a work of art, just as there is no possession of ideas; the dramaturg is then content to act as the invigilator and attendant of the showing, the steward on the journey of a thought.

(Heathfield, 2011: 110)

Edit Kaldor, who directed and wrote the script for *WOE*, has extensive dramaturgical experience herself. As her assistant dramaturg *she* was thus forced to find other functions than focussing on the structure of the script (and thus the performance). Kaldor herself called her a ‘conversation partner’, close to a tutor in an educational situation. This experience challenged her previous conception of the role of the dramaturg as someone who should serve the director and the material, and more or less disappear herself. She had previously been thinking of her job as dramaturg in terms of a midwife. This often made the working relationship somewhat awkward. She had often held back her thoughts or critique trying to be strategic, helpful, supportive and as she thought, showing more solidarity to the project and the director or choreographer. In the context of this research project her own agenda, stakes, and issues have forced her into a more critical approach. It has taught her ways of working where she admits her unavoidable influence by serving the creative process more through also adding, disturbing, and provoking the process. Perhaps allowing herself to be less flexible, spending more time to let relationships move, expand and change – through **patience**, touch, tenderness, and also resistance, irritation, misplacement, and bad timing – has been beneficial? It is another understanding of solidarity involving greater trust to both follow and resist, but also to just be in the space without any comments or questions. Presence understood as **relation** means to listen. Presence can be enough as a form of tender support. Heathfield writes:

[D]ramaturgy is not an originary source or a final repository of meaning for a work, but rather an agent in a process of communal meaning making. Dramaturgy takes

place in the event of performance – even if the main activities of a dramaturg happen in something known as rehearsal.

(Heathfield, 2011:105)

In the edition of *Theaterschrift 5-6 On Dramaturgy*, the late Belgian dramaturg Marianne van Keerkhoven asks in the introduction if dramaturgy is ‘the thing that connects all the various elements of a play together? Or is it, rather, the ceaseless dialogue between people who are working on a play together?’ (1994: 8-10). As this research has taken the notion of the **thing** as one of its core concepts, it is interesting to note how Van Keerkhoven here calls dramaturgy a thing. Is this just a situation in which the word ‘thing’ is casually standing in for some indeterminate phenomena, or does this use of the word thing indicate, however unintentionally, a quite precise designation? Her expression suggests dramaturgy to be in becoming almost visibly materializing, although not completely clear or defined. Her possibly unconscious use of the word ‘thing’ points to dramaturgy as that which gathers all other material and ephemeral movements, intensities, and substances in the performance space giving it structure and form. This corresponds to a conceptual understanding of things as that, which gathers both material and metaphysical phenomena suggesting a form in becoming. However, never stable, never defined, always with a side, aspect, or face that is withdrawn and **unknown**. Van Keerkhoven puts the thing as an opposition to dramaturgy being a ceaseless dialogue. One could claim that the dialogue is a means by which the thing appears, although perhaps not ceaseless but rather with breaks, pauses, silences and separate lines of thought. How, then, is the labour of a dramaturg manifested in that thing, and how does one treat, relate and stay present with the dramaturgical thing? Now, Van Keerkhoven is not saying that these are the only two aspects of contemporary dramaturgy, but she points to them as being central.

Heathfield speaks of dramaturgy as a form of responsibility, not to a director, performers, set designers or others, but to that which is immanent in any given performance, ‘its phenomena and forms of representation’ (2011: 110). How can the dramaturg perform this responsibility? To see the performance and the performance material be it the text, the choreography, the visuals, the sound, etc. as things may be one way. The most common understanding of what a thing is connects to the (mirror) play between what is **withdrawn** and revealed in the thing. This would imply that there are hidden aspects to the performance, which are to be respected. The work of the dramaturg is then *not* to notoriously interpret and unveil underlying meaning, but rather to take care of the materialised and perceivable in order to also care for the immanent, the invisible, the unspoken and provide space for that which is unknown, and which cannot be known. It is what André Lepecki speaks of as the ‘inexact-yet-rigorous’ or the connection between knowing and not knowing (2011: 187).

Any performance can be critiqued for its dramaturgical structure. Any dramaturgical structure will include some things and expel other things from its framework. In *Encountering Loss* and *Childism* there was an aspiration to find a balance between the desires and feelings of the collaborators to include certain texts and things, which automatically pushed other things away, and to somehow let other factors push texts into the foreground through the collective process: factors such as the physical circumstances (rehearsal space, time of year, weather etc.), events in the **collaborator**’s life and in the local and global community, and the nature of certain texts or things themselves that seemed to protrude out of the collection of things, or even demanding to be rendered present. The latter things then needed to be balanced by other less demanding things of more anecdotal or personal character.

A materialist approach to staging documents challenges the dramaturg's position as much as it challenges the position of the professional performers. Theatre artists tend to use material to construct meaning and the overall artistic expression. Dramaturgy is a structure that provides a certain level of control over these parameters. Avoiding the question 'what do we want to say' and instead turning to the question of what the material wants to express, seems radical. How can we step back from our professional roles and instead listen to and trust the material? It is a question of the relationship and balance between being affected by the material and affecting it. Can we let the material group together and form a dramaturgy through a reciprocal dialogue with our bodies, sensibilities and minds, which are naturally also formed by our professional experience? During the work with *Childism*, there was an operating force emerging from a subjective need for perfection, a need to develop and find the 'right' dramaturgy. But this probably does not exist. The collection of material may vary, as may the way it will group itself in collaboration with human agents at a specific time and place. But there is no ideal; there is only a coming together, reflecting ongoing relationships of transformation and change.

When treating traumatic material such as child **abuse** or loss under the attempt of a materialist strategy of staging documents, it seemed relevant to put different kinds of texts in relation to each other, and also important to have texts that represented various different voices that deals with the topic. In *Childism* these voices could be seen to include the informant, the lawyer (authoritative voice, the law), non-abusive mothers, the reporter, the therapist, the witness, a friend, the **actor**, the **dancer**, the dramaturg, and the audience. The one subject to whom it is difficult to give **voice** is the perpetrator. The perpetrator represents an absence that still is very present. It is an absence without a voice of its own, but always implicated in every other voice. In *Childism* the focus lay on the experience of the **survivor**. It would surely complicate matters greatly if it was possible to find an

expression for the absent perpetrator. The informant in *Childism* makes some reflections around her experiences of the abuser, and research has proven that perpetrators have often been abused themselves. The goal with the various voices presented in *Childism* was to shed light on the fact that any story from lived life is never one story but always consists of many viewpoints, agendas, and ways of constructing a **narrative**. This hopefully became a way to question 'truth' as a parameter for dealing with traumatic events in the first place. There is a certain amount of risk in this way of working dramaturgically, which may be perceived as random, inexact, precarious and not in full control.

The dramaturgy in *Childism* follows the call of the documents. It is not a dramaturgy of abuse or of trauma as such. By exploring the dramaturgy of the **document**, the intent is to establish a more common discourse that can address questions of abuse, which concern us all as a collective and a society. A dramaturgy of abuse or trauma would look very different, since the experience of trauma has its own corporeal (il)logic. That said, however, it may be that dramaturgy of documents is already bound up with some kind of trauma. An attempt was made during this research to work with the story of a male dancer. It is someone who has a good, interesting, but rather 'normal' life. This situation presented problems of what to actually say and share with an audience because nothing really stood out or called for attention. The dancer and the dramaturg were not able to find a common point of energy from where to work and construct material. Perhaps the filmmaker Alexander Kluge was right when proposing that documentary dramaturgy needs a centre of gravity. He argues that there is a wound or an injury 'around which stories are constructed' (Kluge, 1994: 326). The wound itself cannot be experienced or represented in the theatre but only 'a ring of narration' where any number of people can take part narrating stories that are 'near or distant, subconscious or conscious' (326).

Hans-Thies Lehmann points to the contemporary dramaturg as a ‘negotiator for the freedom of theatrical experimentation and risk’ (Lehmann & Primavesi 2009: 4) instead of mainly being the advocate of the text as a literary advisor, or being someone watching over institutional frameworks (repertoire, marketing etc.). In contemporary culture where mediatization and the overloading of image and information is a reality that has changed our modes of perception, audience reception and participation, the contemporary dramaturg often operates as an instigator for creative freedom. For many decades dramaturgical practice has challenged structures where the text is the focal point of reference. The traditional work of the dramaturg connected to play analysis and repertoire has changed and evolved into providing a more complex overview connecting, relating, and putting various parameters in dialogue and **conversation**. Belgian dramaturg and artist Myriam Van Imshoot writes of the dramaturg as almost obsolete in an interdisciplinary context (2003). Van Imshoot argues for her work as a dramaturg being a labour disappearing into the creative process in contemporary working methodologies. When a group of artists with various skills and backgrounds (including the dramaturg) organize their work together in a dramaturgical way, a process where everyone shares and discusses what goes on in a practical and reflexive manner, they collectively perform the dramaturgical labour and create the dramaturgical thing together. This was the case in both *Encountering Loss* and *Childism*. However, in *Childism* the performing dramaturg was also the instigator of the project, which built on her personal relationship over many years with the informant. This complicated her role on stage where she ended up representing the authoritative voice (reading and discussing constitutional laws and the UN child convention), and also performed what could be read as a master-technician surveying the entirety of the **presentation**. In retrospect it may have been easier to practice the ideals that lie implicit in the suggested materialist strategy of staging documents from the perspective of the dramaturg, if she had not been present on stage herself. This is due to the

levels of self-consciousness that arrive with performing complicating the ways the ideals of object-oriented philosophy challenge the ego position of the performer. For the same reasons, performing made it more difficult for her to provoke and disturb the process in the final phase. On the other hand, being immersed in the presentation of the work with the audience, offers a chance to practice relations in a different way than when staying off the stage. It may provoke other modes of performing similar to the ways the labour of dramaturgs has been shaped through encounters with performance practices.

The dramaturg in this research project first trained in the tradition of physical and devised theatre. She trained with Jacques Lecoq who taught her about improvisation, action, movement analysis, and spatial awareness in performance practice. However, in his school students also train in seeing. Lecoq's pedagogy is based on practices of doing and observing others doing. Her professional experience as a performer improvising and devising performative work, and all the anxiety and joy of standing in front of an audience, also informs her work as a dramaturg. In all aspects of her practice she draws on these embodied experiences, including the act of seeing. It is through the activity of looking that seeing happens. Looking is the concrete act while seeing is the way the **body**, intellect and senses reflect and process what has been looked at. She relates to what she sees and how that triggers her thinking and her writing, and feeds back into artistic collaborations. It is in the activity of looking that she starts to see ways in which visuals, movement, space, objects, sounds, and **words** can relate to each other in performance. Seeing triggers her sensorial body, sets it in motion activating physical **rhythms**, which create new images, connections, thoughts and ideas.

The dynamics underlying my teaching are those of the relationship between rhythm, space and force. These laws of movement have to be understood on the basis of the human body in motion: balance, imbalance, opposition, alternation,

compensation, action and reaction. These laws may all be discovered on the body of a spectator as well as in that of an actor.

(Lecoq, 2002: 21)

These laws may also be discovered in the work of a dramaturg. Seeing and **listening** is part of a bodily practice, triggering movements connecting to physical and mental **memory** traces, belief systems, knowledge, and spiritual, social and cultural formation as well as the physical sense apparatus. *Feeling* is a tool activated by the sense of those various rhythms. It is a way of working and creating related to the way Raymond Williams connects past and present, form and formlessness, feeling and thought, as well as the personal and the social. '[A]ll consciousness is social, its processes occur not only between but within the relationship and the related' (Williams, 1977: 130). In his book *Marxism and Literature*, Williams writes about 'structures of feeling' as a way to understand culture. It is a 'concern with meanings and values as they are lived and felt' (132) and how these concerns relate to systematic beliefs. Her work as a dramaturg is practiced in the way Williams describes 'thought as felt and feeling as thought'. Williams identifies art practices as the places where the articulation of new structures of feeling in the social and cultural fabric are first experienced. When she is able to see and listen, she has a feeling that guides the creative imagination. This feeling is strongly connected to the relationship between rhythm, space and force, as it is felt and experienced physically. It is a practice that is also about making connections between everything one encounters, that which crosses one's path. It is about connecting the world of a rehearsal space with the greater global movements outside it. In a much later article, Van Keerkhoven speaks of dramaturgy as:

'feeding the on-going conversation on the work, it is taking care of the reflexive potential as well as of the poetic force of the creation. Dramaturgy is building

bridges, it is being responsible for the whole, dramaturgy is above all a constant movement. Inside and outside.'

(Van Keerkhoven, 2009: 11).

In her work she is part of shaping the dramaturgical thing as much as the dramaturgical thing shapes her. It is a mutual relationship of dependency.

In much of the writings on dramaturgy and dramaturgical methods and approaches there is a strong discourse around the way a dramaturg functions as the archive of the performance process, a memory that is kept in storage by the dramaturg's intense note-taking, often keeping a production book, or as André Lepecki has expressed it in an unpublished interview with Synne Behrndt in 2006, 'creating the memory of a production' (Turner & Behrndt, 2008: 178). Although much is expressed around the dramaturg having a position that is difficult to frame because it stretches between being an advisor, a co-creator, a co-director, a text consultant, a curator, a creative critic, or an outside eye, the emphasis seems always to be the function of taking notes. Does that imply striving towards stability, turning the dramaturgical thing into an object to be identified and understood, securely placed in relation to humans? It is an obsession for details that needs to be related to 'the wider perspective' of a piece. It is a fear and a distrust of not remembering what happened at moments in the process, a certain anxiety of losing something important. What is this strong worry to forget and what is potentially lost?

In her practice as dramaturg, she also takes notes; however, she does not tend too much to details. She rarely takes notes in the rehearsal space; it usually happens a few hours later in her study or in a café. She trusts her memory to a large degree, and she trusts the memory of everybody else involved. There is an exchange with the other creative partners' similar processes, and the ways memories of what took place intertwine and shape other ideas of

what is going on. This process of trusting and actively working with memory and time is a way to create the overview and the dramaturgical structures and progression of a piece. Later, when leaving the rehearsal space, moving further away, reflecting and processing is where the note-taking happens as an attempt to discover entanglements and patterns that can push the work forward. Heidi Taylor speaks of 'deep dramaturgy' in her study on site-specific practices. Taylor proposes five principles for a deep dramaturgy, which all seem to focus on the sensorial experiences of a space and a situation. She speaks of giving attention to the 'unscripted texts' of a space, which is relevant to the practice of looking, seeing, listening, and feeling. Taylor underlines in her first of the five principles that 'all signs in the performance space have meaning, independent of their usefulness to the project'. This happens, she explains, through the rhythm of sounds, movement and architecture (Taylor, 2004: 17). Discovering the ways all things shape the form presented and the situation including performers and audiences, is perhaps a constructive focus for a contemporary dramaturg? It means allowing for a cacophony, a polyphonic structure, and a complex chaos that demands full attention and constant participation in its shifts, transformations and movements in order to facilitate performance structures to appear.

Her own experience of things and how she relates to them has changed over the years. When in a theatre space she is fascinated by the way things in the space are 'just there' in a way watching, or perhaps witnessing, everything that goes on. Humans seem to have a very fast tempo in relation to most other things in the theatre, such as walls, floor, lamps, chairs, curtains, grids etc. When she looks at those things, it makes her calmer, less nervous and less anxious. She is grateful for the way the things in that space seem to support and hold all the strange and crazy stuff actors, dancers, performers, designers, directors and dramaturges are doing in there. It is like they are smiling to it all demonstrating other ways of being in relation. It is not a frozen stillness she experiences from the things, but rather a slow moving process of change that relates to other rhythms of change passing through the room.

Dramatic text

In *Encountering Loss* we explored a method for documentary work which has a fictional dramatic text as a centre point for generating dialogues around a topic. From those **conversations**, some of the documentary material is developed. It was important to be clear with the collaborators from the start that the goal was not to stage the play but to use it as an instigator. We did not want to directly ask our **collaborators** to speak about their lives and testify specific experiences of loss. Instead we wanted to instigate discussions and hear their opinions about how we as a society treat and deal with loss, focussing more on social and political structures and how they function and relate to the individuals they are meant to serve, rather than personal and private testimonies. Although we were well aware that personal accounts and references would occur in the course of our conversations and through the practical tasks they were given, our main focus was always to research the topic of loss from a broader angle than the personal story. Simultaneously, we wanted the material to be presented in front of an audience to be documentary in the sense that it was mirroring their personal values, views, and thoughts. Throughout the process, we were constantly reminding ourselves that social and political structures are always connected to the personal. By using the play *Tideline* by Lebanese-Canadian dramatist and director Wajdi Mouawad as a working tool, focusing on the losses of the youth in the fictional play along with public news stories and images, we were able to keep this connection open and vibrating as well as oscillating between what is perceived as fictional and real. The play becomes an intermediary structure that works as a reflector. By looking together at the play as a material we share, which has nothing to do with our individual lives, we see how our own situation as individuals and as part of a society relate differently or similarly to the fictional plot in the play. Focussing on another reality, be it fictional or real, becomes a channel to access the complex realities full of disconnected experiences in which the collaborating subjects exist and function.

The play *Tideline* is about a group of young people who meet in a situation after a civil war where they have all suffered concrete loss of friends, family members, homes and hopes. The play questions loss of childhood innocence and youth, matters of growing up, as well as grief when losing loved ones, thus loss of past history as well as future possibilities. We read sections of the play in each workshop and started discussions about our own society and situation from that point. From these discussions we moved on to practical tasks, such as short writing exercises, interviews with family members about loss, questioning people on the street, performative actions in public space such as pretending to be crying, sleeping or wounded, meeting with social workers or other people in official positions, listening to official talks on related topics etc. Starting from the play made the collaborators freer and safer to voice their feelings and opinions about loss because the main focus was not directed towards them as subjects. It seemed to contribute to them taking responsibility for the process and the material produced. The dramatic text was a common platform on which conversations could happen offering a distance to one's own experiences and life, and where each individual could better control what to add to that common space. This platform worked constructively for producing documentary material and seemed empowering for the collaborators. It put them on a relative equal level with the two project leaders (Toril Solvang and Camilla Eeg-Tverbakk) when producing and devising material. Avoiding the testimonial situation also enables an avoidance of a personalization and individualization of issues that easily moves into sentimentality, where the one testifying become victimized in relation to the listener-artist's position of power as the instigator of the situation. Additionally, the method of using a fictional dramatic text as a platform for conversation blurs the perceived dichotomy between reality and fiction. It seemed to have a similar function on the audience reception as seen below in the question from an audience member.

Questions that occur along the way include what kind of theatre this is. I question if it is theatre or something else. Because the way I experience it you go in and tell a story from the play, and then you move out of that and tell something very personal, and you say: “this is me, this is my story, and it is true”. We are at the National Theatre, you are on stage and I am seated in the auditorium. Then you come forward and talk about yourselves, and I ask is it theatre now or are we into something else?

(Encountering Loss, 2013b)

Document

What is a document? Originally ‘document’ meant written record on paper, or, later, text-bearing objects. It has now, however, come to include many other things as well, which can be stored and systematized, an activity that is called ‘documentation’. With reference to the librarian and documentarist Suzanne Briet, who argued for a document as being an evidence of something having taken place, Michael Buckland claims that information systems ‘can be used not only in finding material that already is in evidence’ (1998: 220), but also that the order in which things are arranged can turn something into a document, and thus produce evidence for specific purposes. Buckland asks whether an object is turned into a document if it is treated as a document (217): Is it the placing of something into an organized, indexical relationship to other things that turns it into a document? A document has frequently been defined as an object, which is part of a collection for the purpose of preservation, science and education. In another article, Buckland discusses the document’s relation to information arguing that it is ‘information-as-thing’ (Buckland, 1991). This means that a document is a *representation* of knowledge because, as he argues, ‘information-as-knowledge’ is intangible. Further, the information from information-as-thing is processed and treated becoming ‘information-as-process’. It is by examining the

things that we learn, thus they are *evidence* in learning. Our knowledge and opinions are affected by what we see, read, hear, and experience (353). However, Buckland argues that evidence and information-as-thing are both passive; they do not *do* anything, but humans do things *to* and *with* them. ‘They [humans] understand, misunderstand, interpret, summarize, or rebut’ documents and evidence (353). Object-oriented philosophy challenges this stance by questioning the clear division between objects and humans claiming that things are not simply passive, and by encouraging humans to listen more to the ways in which things move instead of manipulating them in their own image. This implies learning from things in different ways than what we are used to, or to become aware of how our behavior, thinking, and knowledge already is being formed by things around us such as for instance documents in an encyclopedic archive like this one.

The relationship between performance and documentation has been much discussed (Schneider, 2011; Auslander, 1999; Schimmel, 1998; Phelan, 1993). The discourse has moved from considering performance to be ephemeral and not possible to preserve, to understanding transference of information from **body** to body and performance re-enactments as documentation equally valid to objects and concrete remains. If we consider the body as a **thing**, could it then also be a document, or, in Buckland’s terms, ‘information-as-thing’? And if so, is it only the body that took part in the original experience that can be considered to be a document, or can another body represent the knowledge of the ‘original’ body experience through a process becoming what Buckland calls ‘information-as-process’? Considering performativity, Rebecca Schneider argues that other bodies can regenerate historical events in the future (Schneider, 2014), where the body is understood as a document or a ‘reiterative machine’. Any document, she argues, ‘can be read as a script for future performance or re-performance’ (2014). Schneider

questions whether or not all archival things also perform a certain kind of liveness when they are encountering other things in the future.



From the presentation of *Childism* at the Norwegian Theatre Academy/ Østfold University College, 14th November 2015
Photo: Patricia Canellis Flesjø

If documents are representative things that provide us with knowledge as evidence, the evidence is most often connected to some form of event. Events cannot be stored, and Buckland speaks of three ways in which evidence of events is used:

- 1) Objects, which can be collected or represented.
- 2) *Representations* of an event such as photos, newspaper clips, memoirs etc.: things that can be stored and retrieved.
- 3) Events can be created or re-created, that is, replicated by others.

(Buckland, 1991: 355).

Buckland makes the presumption that in a reenactment or recreation of an event (an experiment in a laboratory for instance) the objects and things that are used and being

present in the event are as important sources of information, as are objects and documents usually regarded as direct information sources. He asks: 'In what sense does it matter whether the answer to an inquiry derives from records stored in a data base or from reenacting an experiment' (Buckland, 1991: 356)? With this he implies that events (reenacted or acted for the first time) and objects are things of information as much as conventional data and documents are. We could include bodies into this thinking and how another body in re-enactments of historical performance pieces for instance, carries information about the original event being transferred through collecting certain things in a specific ordered way. This is an interesting point when considering the relationship between the original experience and the way the informant remembers and recounts the events, and how this material is treated, recreated, or reenacted in *WOE* and *Childism*. It can be questioned if information is transferred simply through the way things are ordered. Spending **time** with things seems to be an important factor in the transference of information from an original event to a reenactment. Is performance or **presentation** itself equally a source of information as is the original event? The difference between thing and object is much discussed (some thinkers makes no distinction between them). Here I operate with a distinction between them in which things can be both tangible and intangible, while an object is connected to a linguistic labeling and fixation of a thing, framing it as intelligible. Thus we can say that a document can be both object and thing, concrete or ephemeral.

Understanding the ways things are connected, and how they affect the concepts and ways of performing documentary material, questions the proclaimed truthfulness and authenticity of the document as something fixed in time and unchangeable. Using documentary material onstage provides an encounter between what is commonly presumed as being 'real' and 'truthful' in relation to what is presumed to be a space of 'fiction' and

make-believe. When these two aspects are joined, both categories lose their validity as ‘true’ or ‘false’ and something else occurs, which reveals exactly how **reality** and fiction are constructed in relation to each other, creating each other and each other’s worlds. The **documentary theatre** becomes a place in which matters of truth and fiction can be questioned and scrutinized in a collective effort to reveal our relationships to things in the world.

Janelle Reinelt claims that ‘theatrical tools can be useful for decoding social reality, and evidence and documents can enrich the ties between our fictions and our contemporary experiences’ (Reinelt, 2010: 41). In her essay on verbatim theatre in South Africa, Yvette Hutchison draws our attention to the fact that African culture blurs the concepts of the ‘fictional’ and the ‘real’. ‘Truth’ has a different meaning in African culture, she claims, not based on a binary structure. Thus, facts have no higher value than a fictionalised story. The story itself is important

as a mode through which we can know ourselves and explore our history, identity and collective value systems. A story is no less true for being fictional or constructed [...] The truthfulness of a story is measured from the audience reactions, if it evokes debate throughout the performance becoming an interactive event ‘thus the ‘real’ and the ‘fictional’ constantly intersect and inform one another.

(Hutchison, 2010: 62)

Theatre can offer ways in which **memory** is explored creatively, focussing on performative modes of individual and social memory reconstruction. Then theatre is a place for challenging and questioning dominant narratives. The important thing is not *what* happened, because we all perceive events in different ways. Rather, the focus is on the causes and implications of what happened.

Documentary Theatre

What is documentary theatre anyway? The **actor** Petra Fransson expressed the following in a conversation during the work on *Childism*:

This is the first time I am working with documentary material, and in one way there is no difference to working with a play, let's say a Greek drama like Medea. It is a story of an extreme event, a mother killing her children. In a way I feel that it is as authentic as this work. Structurally it is and in the politics I can make out of it. It is authentic in the way that it has happened. I mean, women have killed their children for the same reasons that Medea kills her children.

(Fransson, 2014, my translation)

In much debate around contemporary documentary theatre, the levels of 'truth' and '**reality**' are discussed, often leading to questions of what can be considered 'real documentary' or not. Suzanne Little is concerned with the aesthetic spectrum between representing the real as faithfully (truthfully) as possible and to what level theatrical and dramatic means are used to engage audiences (Little, 2011). She interrogates David Hare's verbatim theatre practice (and dramatic writing) in relation to performances using recordings of interviews directly on stage as truthfully as possible. In the first case the recorded words of real people are 'edited and arranged or recontextualised to form a dramatic **presentation**, in which actors take on the characters of the real individuals whose words are being used' (Hammond & Steward, 2008: 9). In the second case actors repeat the wording, phrasing and physical language of interviewees as accurately as possible, making it clear to the audience it is not their words through the visual use of MP3 players and **earphones** on stage. According to Little, the latter is a practice 'to represent testimony and events according to increasingly strict, self-imposed standards of exactitude' (Little, 2011: 4). Juxtaposing the so-called fictional and documentary material in *Encountering Loss* suggests another paradigm for documentary theatre. In an attempt to move away from

the mentioned spectrum through realizing that both fictional and documentary are equally constructed realities, I propose to frame all material used in theatre productions dealing with ‘real life’ events as things. Perhaps it may be useful to investigate other ways of labeling the activity of theatre and performance practices using real life stories as material, other than documentary theatre?

Derek Paget frames documentary theatre as a genre that ‘highlights a tradition opposed to realism’ where ‘styles other than naturalism have been consistently selected as the rule rather than the exception’ (1990: 42). His main concern, however, is to get past all labelling, discussing how what he calls ‘true stories’ were represented and used in television, radio and theatre before the time of his writing. Theatre, drama and performance throughout history have always used documents or ‘true stories’ as a basis and inspiration, also when transforming it into so called fiction or even abstraction. It is interesting, however, in the contemporary perspective where recorded testimonies and interviews, transcribed **conversations**, or official records from trials are transmitted as ‘true stories’ onstage sometimes almost un-edited, to question what a **document** really is in the context of performance. Are we dealing with questions of truth or reality at all, which seems to be the ideal for many artists working with documentary theatre? Or should we rather focus on questioning how **memory** and documents function and are (re)produced in our context?

We are living in an unprecedented era of immediate documentary saturation, global contraction and temporal simultaneity, in which the nature of the factual is in constant contestation. In the flood of information, which is always edited (leaving something unseen and unspoken outside), as consumers we co-edit by more or less randomly picking and choosing what we want to see, read, or hear. Almost every experience and situation from human life is presently framed and quickly distributed through various media

channels. What is left out are the aspects that complicate and turn any experience into a complex web of connections to sites and things not visible in the framed image or story, and the ways in which our bodies sensually relate to those matters in space and time. Carol Martin points out that all use of documents involves selecting, editing, and organizing the material at hand. She articulates documentary theatre in the following way:

[It is] created from a specific body of archived material: interviews, documents, hearings, records, video, film, photographs, etc. Most contemporary documentary theatre makes the claim that everything presented is part of the archive. But equally important is the fact that not everything in the archive is part of the documentary.

(Martin, 2006: 9)

The rapid distribution of ‘reality proof’ in the contemporary digital world is meant to convince the reader and consumer of its truthful quality due to its status as document. Documentary filmmaker Jill Godmilow suggests that ‘unconsciously embedded in these forms called documentary is the conceit of "the real", which substantiates the truth claims made by these [documentary] films’ (Godmilow, 1997: 80). However, through the frequent use of social media platforms, global audiences are becoming increasingly aware of the fictional side of documentation, especially connected to the mechanisms of selection. Thus a longing for authenticity and finding the actual is growing, leading among other things to an intensified interest for the production of so-called documentary films, theatre and art works.

Although, as Martin claims, documentary theatre is provocative because of ‘the way in which it strategically deploys the appearance of truth, while inventing its own particular truth through elaborate aesthetic devices’ (Martin, 2006: 10), the theatrical frame still questions the document’s intimate bond with authenticity and truth. When removed from its original context a document can only represent one part or aspect of an experience or a

historical moment in time, and thus it is always open for interpretations and distortions. Introducing documents into the presumed fictional space of theatre suggests that perhaps the document itself is always already a re-presentation of experience – and thus subject to similar possibilities of ‘theatrical’ **interpretation** in its own creation. This is the power and the promise the framework of theatre and art can offer to documentary material today. As soon as a document of any kind is presented in a theatrical (or artistic) frame, it is doubted because ‘[b]y using documents at all, the dramatist problematises (calls into doubt or question) both the fictional nature of drama and the factual nature of information’ (Paget, 1990: 15). How can theatre take advantage of this doubt?

Paget is concerned with how theatrical naturalism supports the hegemonic structures in society. This, he argues, is also why the hunger for ‘true stories’, and documentary drama as a highly potent form of naturalism, has gained ground also in mainstream art and media, for example in emergence of the highly constructed, theatricalised, and edited genre of ‘reality TV’. Firstly, documents are potentially threatening to the dominant form of economy and ruling structures, because they may reveal facts that are supposed to be kept out of the public eye. The bureaucratic reflex is thus to control the circulation of documents. Secondly, documentary forms of drama are and have been much focussed around individual stories of lived life, which supports the idea of self-realisation and subject formation as a rather fixed image as opposed to focussing on structural aspects of society and the role individuals play inside these as well as a more floating understanding of subjectivity. This, however, is a difficult balance to find in practice. It is exemplified below through the performance *Ses i min nästa pjäs – et drama* (*See you in my next play – a drama*) of the Norwegian director, dramaturg and performer Pia Maria Roll (2015).

The piece addresses ways individuals suffer under structural changes in working conditions connected to new management practices. Individuals without any prior theatre training presented their stories on stage based on lived experience. Two of them had been whistle-blowers. One woman is a nurse who tells us her story of the insecurities employees experienced when the ownership of the nursing home where they worked moved from state to private ownership. The intention of the artist is to problematize this politics of changes to governmental policy around the protection of workers' rights, which is currently taking place all over the Western world. However, we are presented a single, coherently structured story where we are quickly lost in the personal pain and sorrow of an individual. Because her body is authentic in the sense that she is the very subject who had the experience, her **body** is automatically identified with. The question is: how would this have worked if a professional actor spoke her words? Would the story presented reveal more complexity, be more fragmented, more paradoxical, more difficult to grasp? What spaces of perception could be opened up, if for instance, the nurse's body was present, perhaps dancing, while someone else spoke her words? Emotional attachment to the story is different from relating to it physically and sensually. In the act of becoming a document, the nurse placed onstage giving her testimony secures the claim of truth in the argument, which becomes difficult to oppose. The emotionality of this kind of presentation easily overshadows the potential critique of the political and social structures that put her into this situation in the first place.

Contemporary documentary theatre has taken many forms after the Blue Blouse and Agit Prop theatre movements in Russia in the early 20th century, and the living newspaper traditions in the UK and US were actively dealing with present news events hoping to influence the future by informing, educating, and empowering the working class. Since the late 1990s, we have seen non-trained performers on stage who represent 'themselves' and

speak of their own lives and concerns. The German directors' collective Rimini Protokoll, which has toured extensively in Europe and elsewhere, calls them experts of the everyday (Dreyse & Malzacher 2008). In many cases the use of performers who are there only as themselves become a heightened form of naturalism. It could be called neo-naturalism or high naturalism, as it is motivated by theatre's constant search for authenticity and to present 'real life' on stage. In the UK, verbatim theatre in particular has developed into a distinct genre with its own history and critical discourses. Usually the aim is to shed light on a forgotten or overlooked incident in order to make voices heard and pay justice to people involved, or it is a matter of highlighting a specific case or historical event in order to give a different view and interpretation of what happened from a contemporary perspective. These forms and approaches to staging documentary material are about learning from the past in order to better unveil and understand the present. Testimonial performance carries dramatic potential as the testimony often is about revealing hidden, taboo, or traumatic experiences on a personal level. We live in a time and global culture that thrives on these kinds of dramatic self-experienced stories, which all kinds of media from news broadcasting, newspapers, social digital media, to weekly tabloid magazines use as a way to engage the curiosity of consumers. In the frame of this project lies an attempt to develop strategies that reveal the connection between the personal and the political structures, between the informant and the artist, between fact, fiction and the poetic.

In regard to Roll's piece it is fair to say that her highly intelligently composed dramaturgical structure does address these issues. In the end Siri F appears on stage, set up as another whistle-blower to tell her story from working in the Norwegian Audience Development Agency. However, Roll lets Siri reveal their personal friendship, thus also exposing the complex position of the director herself as well as Siri exposing her

vulnerability in relation to her present position and the work she is doing there. The performance opens with a speech by Roll in the foyer of the theatre before the audience enters the auditorium. Here Roll sets up an expectation that the secret and hidden agendas of the Norwegian Audience Development Agency will be revealed during the performance. Thus she turns herself into the protagonist of the play, while in the end lets Siri F be the antagonist that wins the game. Siri refuses to say anything negative about the agency, stating that she is interested in fulfilling the project she is employed to do and that she finds it interesting and a place where she can influence from the inside rather than critique from the outside. What Roll manages is to question her own position as an outside critique, as well as expose the fear of the agency to be revealed of their secrets. The latter was foregrounded at the premiere where the managing director of the agency was present throwing comments to Roll during her opening speech, trying to oppose her polemics about their work. In this way the agency itself shows that it does have something to hide, or rather it finds parts of its own ideology problematic—or, worse, it is a blind spot.

E

Earphones

In the second presentation of *Encountering Loss* at the National Theatre in Oslo, we chose to use short sections of a recording of the Norwegian terrorist Anders Behring Breivik's defence speech on stage. Three of the performers walked centre stage putting earphones in their ears and turning on their phones, thus making it clear to the **audience** they were about to listen to something. First, Nel Ewa spoke her section, repeating the **words** and the **voice** she heard in her ear. We had practiced a rather distant mode of repeating, trying to avoid **interpretation** and expressing any opinion about what was being said. When Justine was to perform her part, she was not able to turn on her device properly, and had to stand for a long time waiting for the text to begin. It was a long moment of silence. Thomas, who was

the third person to speak, chose to start his text after a while, hoping to return to Justine after he was done. However, Justine never got to perform her text because she still could not make it work and was eventually broken off by the dramaturg asking Aurora to continue with the next part of the **presentation**. The long silence in this situation became filled with questions of absence; the absent voice, the absence of taking a stand towards what was being said, the absence of announcing what the text was and where it came from, and the absence of mentioning the killings and lost lives Breivik had caused. The long silence allowed for a tender yet tense presence of everyone and everything in the room all actively relating to what was taking place.

In the context of **documentary theatre**, the technique of using earphones aesthetically makes it clear that there is another source speaking, which most probably does not exist in written form but is another voice (with an absent **body**) present in the room although the audience cannot hear it. The recorded voice, which the actors overtly listen to, is transmitted through the performers' own voices. It makes it clear that the actor is speaking for someone else, which was the main reason to use earphones in certain sections of *Childism*. It also demonstrates that the actors are not occupied with the most basic **thing** expected of a conventional actor: to know their lines by heart. Using earphones or reading from a paper or script on stage, is a mode of acting that operates as the vandalism of the conventional performing mode. The **listening** act involved in this technique establishes a space between the text material and the bodies in the room, which is less evident when speaking a memorised text that is often understood as the actors' interpretation within the game of make-believe that the actor is speaking her own words. When hearing the voice of another subject through the earphones, the **actor** can simply repeat what they hear, and the work is about not colouring the text with emotions, empathic understanding, or any other level of interpretation. This leaves the interpretive task primarily to the **audience** rather

than to the performer, who is busy concentrating on listening and repeating the recorded text. In the performances *No Dice* (2008) and *Romeo and Juliet* (2009) of the company Nature Theatre of Oklahoma, this technique offers a playful and humorous approach to documentary text material, which reveals the tragic and comic sides of our everyday speech. It gives the performer a chance to comment on the text by playing with the distance between the performer's self and the text on the recording. Aesthetically this opens up a potential for treating everyday, realistic situations in abstract and poetic ways. The Wooster Group has used this technique in many productions, most notably in *House Lights* (1997) where they performed Gertrude Stein's play *Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights* (1938) in combination with *Olga's House of Shame*, a film by Joseph Mawra (1964) treated as choreographic text. Stein's text has a complex **dramaturgy** with many repetitions, and the film equivalently uses a repeated, somewhat frantic, physical language. Having Stein's text on the ear, and looking at screens of the film on stage, trying to repeat the physical action and gestures, allows for a playful approach echoed in the work of the company Nature Theatre of Oklahoma. It also allows the performer to concentrate less on the content and meaning and focus more on keeping vibrant relations to things in the space, exploring and unfolding them together with the audience and leaving the task of interpretation to them. When this technique is used with documentary material such as the defence speech of Behring-Breivik in *Encountering Loss*, or sections of the informant's speaking in *Childism*, it creates a visual gap suggesting a distance, which removes the text from the original subject and body and the emotional state connected to him or her at the moment of its original uttering. Instead it is possible to discover and hear the words in new and different ways as the original source recording is removed from its original context and transformed in the present through other bodies. The recording device and the earphones signals this process clearly to the audience. Which of the two voices represents the document?

Encyclopaedia

An encyclopaedia is a phenomenon in Western culture that has existed for around 2000 years. In the 18th century, however, the publication of encyclopaedias increased in number, connected to the development of the field of science. It was at this time that John Harris is known to having introduced the alphabetic ordering of information and articles. The encyclopaedia is a reference work holding ‘a comprehensive summary of information from either all branches of knowledge or a particular branch of knowledge’

(‘Encyclopedia’, *Wikipedia* 2015). (Wikipedia is usually not a reliable source in the context of a PhD; however in this case it seems relevant as Wikipedia represents the current destiny of the encyclopaedia, which is discussed below.) An encyclopaedia is a number of collected articles about a subject, often by a number of different expert authors. It is not about defining a word such as in a dictionary, but it is about offering a more extensive outlining of a topic originally with an educational agenda. Wikipedia is a contemporary digital encyclopaedia, which is collaboratively edited, multilingual and continuously evolving. One of the interesting things with this version of a contemporary online encyclopaedia is how it questions the power of definition by its open-source format, where anyone can edit and add facts and information about a topic. This situation demonstrates how questions of truth and false are relative. Wikipedia is often accused of falsehood and truths that are subject to manipulation. However, it reveals that ‘truth’ is always under construction. Perhaps Wikipedia offer an image of the real that becomes very truthful due to its collective authorship?

An encyclopaedia is a form that aspired to collect ‘all knowledge’ of a field (or all knowledge of a culture, such as the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*). The 20th century has taught us that any linear or edited collection is never the full picture of the complexity of any **reality**, and that knowledge is not permanent or fixed in **time**. Kasper Nefer Olsen writes:

‘Historically having been encyclopaedic, knowledge has become labyrinthic: having been a furious river, which carried humanity forward, it has become an impassable delta’ (1993: 7, my translation) Nefer Olsen points to the ways in which our ideas of knowledge are based on ideals, and how time will always question those ideals that will eventually show to be unattainable (7). This is how knowledge and ideas of truth are constantly evolving. An alphabetically-ordered encyclopaedia can be perceived as linear. However, each text can also be understood as a thing, turning the encyclopaedia itself into a thing and an assembly of vibrant matter (Bennett, 2010). In that case the alphabetic ordering is simply an organizing structure used as a dramaturgical concept and navigational tool. The world is full of things, and an encyclopaedia is an attempt to create structure out of chaos. As such it is a sense-making machine.

Empty Spaces

(places to breathe and listen)

Ethics (rehearsing ethics)

In *Artificial Hells*, Claire Bishop proposes ‘if ethical criteria have become the norm for judging this art [socially engaged practices], then we also need to question what ethics are being advocated’ (2012: 23). In social practices within the visual art field, ‘good’ intentionality to engage and ‘create dialogue’, where renunciation of authorial marks is given value as quality criteria, is set above aesthetic qualities according to Bishop. She claims: ‘The visual, conceptual and experiential accomplishments of the respective projects are sidelined in favour of a judgement on the artists’ relationship with their **collaborators**’ (22). Is it possible to make art or theatre that lingers between the social turn as defined by Bishop with all its critical points concerning quality judgement and potential social outcomes and consequences, and art understood as aesthetic and poetic expressions meant for sensorial experiences and reflection more than social action? When engaging a group of ‘youth’, is the project *Encountering Loss* socially engaged art practice, is it theatre, or perhaps **documentary theatre**? Perhaps it is neither, or perhaps it is all?

Following Bishop, we can question what ethics are being advocated within a documentary theatre production. How we as artists relate to our material is an ethical matter. When speaking of **listening** in this research, it is not primarily the quality of listening to the collaborators or the informant that stands in focus (although that is of course also important). The point is rather to shift the attention to the things and the material with which we work, and relate to them as important players becoming more aware of how they shape and create our work, gathering things and people in a web or dance of entanglements equally dependent on each other. In documentary work the most central **thing** is the text either spoken or moved. In *Childism* however, we also introduced other objects equally important such as songs (played through loudspeakers), dirt, water, pearls, needles, fabric and thread. Sewing was an activity we engaged with throughout the workshop process, initially introduced by our informant. The pieces of fabric and sewing came to carry significant meaning about absent things: the things that did not find a place in the presentation or that could not manifest. The sewing somehow called on other memories than the ones shared.



Other important elements were water and dirt, which transmitted information both visually and as sound. Without providing context of how or why, these elements were introduced as central to the informant's experiences as a child. Through relating to them physically, listening, focussing on their movements, the attempt was to hear, smell and feel traces of the experiences of a maltreated child.

Forms and structures are created but never constant. In this perspective, a documentary text is equally detached from the informant, the artist(s), the performers, and the audience.

Documentary theatre, then, is not about compassionate identification, which Bishop identifies as 'typical of the discourse around participatory art ...' (2012: 25). Still, it has a function as a place and an occasion for encounters and exchanges around social and political issues, which we need to discuss in common. How to solve those issues practically needs to be decided in other arenas than the theatre, but the theatre can be a place where we can prepare, discuss, and perhaps even rehearse and test out the possible ways of dealing with common challenges. The theatre space and the art context in general are places where also the violent, absurd, and unpleasant models and solutions can be tested in order to make us feel, see, and reflect on ethical values together. Let's say the theatre demonstrates an ethics of the unknown where the attempt is to preserve and give space to what cannot be known, and tune in to the movements and connections between things, let them happen, and be part of an ongoing creation, re-creation, and exchange: to risk failure, care, violence, and patience to discover how things are entangled. It concerns the relationship between things that influence the work, including bodies understood as an assemblage of things.

In order for documentary theatre to become a space to rehearse and practice ethics, the ethical awareness in the field needs to be strengthened. However, having ethical guidelines

(such as there are for journalists) is not constructive. The playful and poetic spaces of art must also allow the dark and horrific, just as those are important ingredients in a child's play in order to learn the difference between everyday **reality** and the reality of the fantastical. It is an ongoing tension between the social and artistic critique of art, each of which accuses the other of either being too moralistic and idealistic, or too self-centred and concerned with individual freedom. The tension between the two positions will always be there, as Bishop emphasizes, claiming that 'social discourse accuses the artistic discourse of amorality and inefficacy' (2012: 276) while the artistic discourse accuses the social discourse of being 'stubbornly attached to existing categories [...] at the expense of sensuous immediacy' (276). This tension needs to be remembered and constantly related to and negotiated when creating and practicing theatre and performance, which is especially crucial when dealing with things and material that are connected to living people who may be present in the **audience**. In *Childism* we could possibly have been much harsher and more detailed when describing the rape of a child. However, we needed to question our motives for doing so. What was expressed in the monologue about rape was our attempt to let the audience confront the horror, but staying within a framework we could defend as ethical in relation to our intentions; to break taboos without becoming pornographic, and to expose rape as violence removed from sex and desire. We wanted to create a scene that our informant felt was representative for her experience, and also present something that the audience could relate to without closing off or rejecting the image as amoral. Some audience members questioned our responsibility, saying they felt sections of the piece were 'too much' and 'too intense'. One commented that he felt he was pulled into something that he could not step away from, and another said the space felt narrow in the sense that she could cry, but not scream of anger. This demonstrates the tension between the two positions; we need to be able to deal with what is perceived as 'unethical' in a social space, but we need to do so in ways that does not break up the collective space and thus prevents

us from establishing a dialogue. Perhaps one function of socially engaged, participatory or documentary art and theatre is to expose the contradictions between social and artistic discourses and to question normative and moralistic attitudes as well as the notions of artistic freedom? The way social discourse sometimes critiques what is seen as amorality and inefficacy within art practices may be worth thinking about in relation to artistic representations that may appear unethical. However, this way of questioning the normative may be a very important ethical task of artists today.

Ethics of the Unknown

The **ethics** advocated for in the performance works of the present practice-as-research project is based on an understanding of ethics as unfolding in the relational spaces between agents (things, objects, subjects). How we relate to the unknown in the other concerns listening to the call of things - a call to be partly 'presenced'. An ethics of the **unknown** responds to the call of the other, understood as alterity, through a sensuous touch of caring, **tenderness** and patience (Benso 2000: 159-173). These are aspects that depend on spending **time in relation** to something: to stay with things long enough for a relation to evolve and to *let* things happen rather than *make* them happen. As object-oriented ontology (**OOO**) argues, a **thing** always has a side that is known to us and a side that is unknown or withdrawn. To relate to documentary text or any material in performance as things implies to care for and preserve the unknown in things in order not to appropriate them. For Silvia Benso, to relate ethically with things means to access the metaphysical.

What metaphysical ethics does [however] is to consider the other [...] not as presence (that can be possessed because of its full presence), but always as the trace of the presencing (therefore already gone, removed from the scene of discourse). And each trace is already a trace of the trace [...].

(Benso 2000: 136)

To be concerned with the trace is not absence, says Benso, but a “presencing”. In her words, things possess a reality which can be experienced but not possessed through a ‘touching mode of tenderness’ (137). Benso’s project of an ethics of things points to practice: ethics is something to be practised in relational spaces. Benso differentiates between an ethics of things and an ethics of humans; the thing is understood as alterity while the person is understood as the Other. The Other we are bound to in a dual or reciprocal relationship is ‘my’ Other. The thing represents alterity: that which does not belong to me in any way. It stands outside my realm but I can still relate to it and sense its presence (or absence). Benso claims that things ‘signify both a subject and an object for ethics’ (142).

An ethics of the unknown demands a careful and tender form of **listening**. In the essay ‘The Art of Listening’, Peter A. Sørensen introduces the concept of ‘ethics of tonality’, drawing on Løgstrup’s ideas of trust as a basic ethical ground for speech and **conversation**. In *The Ethical Demand* (1997) Løgstrup speaks of how, when we dare to expose ourselves through speech, we hit a certain tonality (tone) in which we transcend ourselves in order to exist in language as relation to the other. If the receiver picks up on this tone, the subject will feel seen or, we could add, the thing will be ‘presenced’. If the receiver does not pick up on the tone, one will feel overlooked. To Sørensen this ‘ethics of tonality’ is an expression of what he calls a radical listening, in which we respectfully receive the other. Sørensen refers to Løgstrup writing about language as something that pulls back in order to let the content of speech protrude. ‘Language expresses a gesture that calls for a listening’ (Sørensen 2007: 105). The tone is crucial in having the words transmit meaning. According to Sørensen, tones are gestural: they are sound gestures. It is not possible, he continues, to control the tone gesture, and it will involuntarily decide the meaning of the content of speech. ‘The tone thus gives the words their meaning and

simultaneously offers humans the possibility to understand the words *between them*.’ (108, my emphasis).

The ethics of the unknown proposed here is a practice of listening and spending time with things through tender touch. It is practicing **rhythm** and musicality in the encounter with texts and materials of **documentary theatre**, as a way to unfold the ‘presencing’ of things and simultaneously preserve the unknown – the mystery that preserves the **reality** in things.

F

Facialities

In discussions about the **ethics** of **documentary theatre** practice, the writing of Emmanuel Levinas is often cited due to its focus on the encounter with the face of the other as a ground experience for the ethical call in humans. In her discussion on our ethical relationship with things, Silvia Benso uses the term ‘facialities’ to describe how things carry both something familiar and simultaneously something unfamiliar with them. Benso critiques or supplements Levinas’ sole focus on the human face as that which evokes ethics. She wants to take his thoughts further and also include the alterity of nonhuman presences. Benso speaks of facialities rather than the face: ‘Facialities evoke the possibility of the existence of faceless faces, which, despite their facelessness, are yet endowed with the intimating power of the face to demand an ethical response’ (2000: xxx). In the scope of this research we have attempted to relate to things and objects (sounds, songs, dirt, water, pearls, sewing material, instruments, dramatic texts, recordings, children’s clothes) as having ‘faceless faces’. It implies that they carry agency, that they are vibrant and call for humans to treat them with respect, wonder, curiosity, and patience. Perhaps the

dramaturg was called by the faciality of memories, stories and testimonies of the informant, to spend time with them searching for ways to temporarily manifest them? The faciality of things represents an otherness with a life-force unknown to us. How can we as artists, performers and dramaturgs relate to the otherness of things without categorizing them into established forms that serve to uphold our own concept of reality? How can the dramaturg let things be and affect the form without taking control? Relating to the faciality of things may mean to create less: to risk not knowing what will take shape, and to have less of a clear agenda. We have tried to listen and sense things with patience and **tenderness** throughout this research process. It has not meant that things have always been treated carefully. The children's clothes in *Childism* were treated violently. In the context of relating to child **abuse**, we ended up throwing them around and cutting them to pieces as a way to express the violation we were addressing. If this was a response to their ethical call, or an overruling decision on our part, is difficult to say. Their silent presence, their facialities, in this specific context seemed to call for us to expose what these kinds of clothes witness in the dark spaces of some childhood realities.

Farness

In his essay 'The Thing' Martin Heidegger departs from a reflection over how to experience 'nearness' in a world where distance has collapsed and everything seems neither near nor far (2001: 163). He arrives at an exploration of what a **thing** is by concluding that we can only reach nearness by attending to what is near i.e. things. However, he is not only interested in things being close; thus, he explains that nearness also *preserves farness*, because there is no near without something being far. This distinction is important, indicating a movement. Thus 'farness,' or distance, is necessary in order to experience nearness. When working with documentary material in performance within the scope of this research, **relation** is explored as an active and mobile state of

being with the text, one that involves a psychophysical distancing rather than identification. It is possible to claim that this distancing preserves ‘nearness’ due to the physical presence maintained. This is different from the contemporary conditions of mediation that creates a *feeling* of ‘nearness’ while indeed preserving ‘farness’. On the other hand, the farness from where we communicate intimate global realities also preserves, or perhaps establishes, other forms of nearness: A sense of nearness based on sharing information and images, exposing the fact that we are connected to one and the same planet where our actions affect us all.

February 2014

In February 2014 the last of the three workshops forming the project *Encountering Loss* was to take place. At that moment the dramaturg, one of the two project leaders, had to travel to Thailand to meet her second and long-awaited child to bring home for adoption. However, the workshop was planned in detail between the two collaborators Toril Solvang and Camilla Eeg-Tverbakk, and it was decided that the young **collaborators** should send daily emails to the dramaturg during the five days of the workshop. The emails are included in the following because they exemplify the working process from the point of view of the collaborators. In the emails they explain the kind of tasks they were given in their exploration of the topic of loss, and how they experienced and engaged with those tasks, which was central to the way material was generated and presented to the audience.

Monday

10-1130 — Going through what we have done since we saw each other last, what we will do/ wish to do this week and who we have interviewed: three priests, one doctor at a section for children with cancer, one from UDI [the government immigrant office] and one person working in an asylum.

1130-1345 — Reading through most parts of the third part of the play. Main themes: Bravery, strength, how to continue after loss, secession, mourning processes, mindfulness (the film crew, smartphones is in focus rather than actual life in the modern world), the

concept with names (the idea that part of an individual is constant despite continuous physical and mental change), and how we remember the dead, for the sake of the living — this is connected to identity and history, and how we don't know what we have until we have lost it.

1400 — Guided tour at the parliament.

1530 — Discussion about the visit at the parliament and how this can be related to the themes we are dealing with; history, identity and the memories of the dead and the lost is central.

(Tjønn, 2014b, my translation)

Wednesday

Hi Camilla.

Hope everything goes well in Thailand!

I have to start with what we did last on Tuesday, since Helene left just before we started the last exercise. We went into pairs and interviewed each other about courage with a time limit of 10 minutes each. We formed the questions after having listened to the speech by Per Fuggeli. We recorded those interviews and transcribed them the following day. At the end of the day, we also each got a 30 minutes' task to write at home, similar to the one we got during the first workshop week.

Wednesday was the third day. We started as usual with logging in, before going into a warmup that Toril conducted. It was a special kind of yoga; I don't remember the name. Anyhow, we have decided to do it tomorrow as well, possibly the next one reporting is able to be more precise. Anyway, it was meant to sharpen our focus, and I think the whole group agreed it worked. Afterwards we did four two-minute writing exercises in order to warm up the head as well. This was the starting point for the writing: "Who am I, I thought, and...", "Why am I a coward when I...", "I want to move on, but..." and "I call you this, because..." While Toril worked on transcribing from the day before, the rest of us discussed ideas for a possible action in public space on Friday. After this we went inside to read all the interviews we had done with each other the day before, and all the 30-minute tasks. After each text that was read, we took time to discuss what was good about the texts, what stuck to us. Then we returned in pairs (one group was three), and recreated, relating to memory, the interviews we had done with professional people before meeting for this workshop. The other person was concentrating on listening. This was done both ways. Then we went on the floor, one couple at the time, and retold what you could remember from the other person's interview. So, for example: Aksel and Helene stood on the floor.

Aksel retold what he could remember of Helene's recreation of her interview with a hospital priest, and then the other way around. This was filmed. At the end we sat down together and spoke about what worked with this form, and what did not work, and finally if there was anything we wanted to add to what the partner had said. Logging out, and done for the day.

Best regards

Thomas

(Stene-Johansen, 2014, my translation)

Thursday and Friday

Hi Camilla!

Hope everything goes well in Thailand! Here in Norway we are doing really fine.

Yesterday was a very productive day. We got as homework to find image and sound material that we brought. There was a lot of nice things and a lot we really want to bring into the presentation. It was not only images and music, but also quite many videos, stories we wanted to share, a poem. So now we feel there is quite a lot of material. In addition, we have been put into two groups and asked to make small presentations of all the material we have. We have talked quite a lot about the relationship we want to have with the audience, and how much we can encourage them. For instance, if we can ask, "Can all of the ones who feel brave put up a hand?" Then we have also come up with ideas of what we want to include in the presentation. Everyone is starting to get nervous since the presentation is already tomorrow, but it has gone well the other times, so it will be all right. We miss you and it is very sad you cannot be here with us, but Toril is doing a great job and the two of you have made a very good plan for us. We are eager to hear how you are doing!

Regards!

Nela

(Tomczyk, 2014, my translation)

G

Gathering

Each theatre performance is a gathering. In its creation it usually gathers people of many professions: directors, dramaturgs, light, stage, and costume designers, music director, composer, actors, dancers etc. In its moments of performance, it gathers audiences. Any theatre performance is a gathering of things. Every **documentary theatre** performance is a gathering of documents, and each **document** is a gathering of things. Further each **thing** is a gathering of other things.

In Heidegger's concept of the thing, gathering is a central aspect. A thing becomes a thing because it gathers what he calls 'the fourfold', which is what 'presences' the thing. The gathering aspect connects to his thinking around the way humans dwell. Dwelling for Heidegger relates to preservation and freeing something, as in sparing it and taking care of it. To save really means to set something free into its own presencing (2001: 148).

Dramaturgically the work in this research is that of gathering material, dwelling in the sense that the theatre event and theatre space is a moment of dwelling where the form that has taken shape takes place. By doing so there is a certain process of preservation although temporary, and a potential for liberation of the material in itself, and of subjective attachments to it. Heidegger explains the 'fourfold' as gathering earth, sky, mortals, and divinities. His concept of the fourfold is widely discussed and critiqued. Graham Harman (2002) explains the concept as a quadrate, representing a tension or relationship between that which is withdrawn and that which is revealed. Earth and divinities represent a totality withdrawn but mirrored in everything as a nourishing and sustaining system. Sky and mortals represent that which is visible and concrete such as the sky (planets, stars, gas clouds) and mortals who are capable of death. Heidegger uses the concept of *tool-beings*: Earth and Gods are *tools*, while sky and mortals are *broken tools*, which means they have

broken out from the ‘referential contexture’ of the withdrawn. Harman thinks the concept of the fourfold ‘presents us with Heidegger’s most diligent attempt to develop a philosophy of objects’ (Harman, 2002: 200). The fourfold does not refer to four different kinds of entities, but points to a global play of four forces in all entities. It is formed from the intersection of two distinct Heideggerian dualisms: the opposition between tool and broken tool, and the difference between something specific and something at all. The relation between the four forces in any object is that of a ‘mirror-play’ (204). Perhaps the ‘life’ in objects, the vibrant in matter that Bennett refers to, is a result of the ‘global play of forces’? Heidegger and Harman’s models of writing about how things gather forces are tools for working with things in a materialist approach to staging documents. They accentuate the impossibility of completely understanding or revealing things. They work with the **unknown** and the withdrawn as much as with what is apparently seen and revealed. We live in a culture where the seen, understood, and proven is valued above the invisible, mystical, or spiritual. A materialist approach to staging documents is as interested in the latter aspects as it is in the former.

H

Heartbeat

At the National Theatre on August 17th 2013, four young performers are standing in a line right in front of the audience in the first row. They are speaking what they remember from a monologue from the play *Tideline* (Mouawad 2011) in three different languages and four different versions. In the text the character Amé violently accuses all parents for his and his mates’ loss of friends, past and future.

I’m not going back to any village unless it’s to kill everyone [...] I’m telling you, the enemies are our parents, so we shouldn’t go back to ANY village at all! We should disembowel our parents and leave their bodies to rot in the sun and take off

to go all over and blow everything up, break everything, burn everything. We'll round them up along a huge wall, we'll line them up and we'll scream at them! We'll tell them that the evil they've done to us is worse than murder, we'll tell them that what they've taken from us is irreplaceable, they've killed the visions of our youth, of our most beloved miracles. We'll tell them that they've taken away our playmates and that in their memory we'll put a crown of their bloody skulls on our playmates' tombs. Then we'll raise our guns to our parents without remorse: Ta Ta Ta Ta Ta Ta Ta Ta!

(Mouawad, 2011: 86)

The four young performers **speaking** (three of them in their native language) are standing in front of representatives of their own families in the **audience**. This situation creates an intense energy possibly caused by nervousness, fear, anger, or perhaps despair and a feeling of being out of control because they are not really able to grasp the full effect of the words they are saying. The material is taking over. At this moment we can almost see their hearts beating faster than usual under their white T-shirts. It is at such moments that it can be important and helpful to remember that the **body** is material, that the heart is a muscle, and that we cannot and do not need to control the expression but simply stay with whatever is happening. This is what these young performers are able to do at this moment. They are not hiding, conceptualising, or directing the course of events. They simply let it happen: tears run, voices fade, and occasionally a forceful energy attacks the words. In this moment we relate to the material bodies and the words as things flowing into space experiencing how it activates our own material bodies.

The heart is a muscle, a thing in our bodies. It is a muscle that contracts within a specific rhythm: we say that the heart beats. Miraculously, this muscle keeps its steady activity from around five weeks after the moment of conception till the moment of our death. The

heart is a thing that cares for us: it is a thing we can trust will be doing its best to keep us alive. The heart saves us, and thus sets us free into our own ‘presencing’ (Heidegger, 2001: 148). For an **actor** to return to the basic **rhythm** of the heartbeat brings her out of the conceptual world and back to the material world: the active relation with the body as a **thing** alive because of its **relation** with other things.

The heartbeats of humans and animals represent our physical rhythm from which we measure all other rhythms. The heartbeats are the rhythm of body and life. Tim Morton explains a beat as a sound, feeling or vibration ‘caused when one sound is withdrawn from another. A sound is split in two. The beat is a fragment of silence between a split sound. A beat is an experience. A beat is interobjective’ (Morton, 2011). Interobjectivity explains Morton, is equivalent to intersubjectivity: ‘nothing is experienced directly but only mediated through other entities. Heidegger argues that we never hear the wind in itself, only the wind in the door. There is always one entity, which is withdrawn’ (2001). The muscle that we call our heart is regularly contracting, pushing our blood through our veins, a movement that we identify as a beat. Between each contraction the muscle stops. Perhaps that silent stop is the actual beat? The heart is a very concrete thing, presenced in its encounter and **interdependency** with other things and bodies in a shared space.

We connect heart to feelings of love and **compassion**. This writing takes form exactly four years after the terror attack in Oslo and on Utøya.



I

Interdependency

Archaeologist Ian Hodder is interested in the reciprocal relationship where humans form things and things form humans through the notion of dependency. Things are not isolated, he says. ‘It is in their connections, and in their flows into other forms, that their thingness resides’ (Hodder, 2012: 8). Hodder questions if humans can be considered things, and concludes that at least we are dependent on things to evolve. Human and non-human entities live and function in interdependency through a web of entanglement, which constantly evolves and grows. Material things, thoughts, games, institutions and knowledge are all things that need to be attached to other things and entities in order to have a function for humans. Thus humans are also part of this web, or dance, of connections between things on equal terms as all other material. Hodder argues for the temporality of all threads of entanglement, and how they are always provisional, partial, and unruly as a consequence of ‘the unexpected clashes between the different temporalities of humans and things, [and] the historical specificities of the practical holes we have dug ourselves into’ (110). Using a **thing** often demands other things to maintain the function of the first thing.

Hodder points to the fact that no things are inert. They change form, have weight, force, velocity, heat, rot, and erode. All matter has some kind of movement within them, they are vibrant (Bennett, 2010). What differentiates us is the tempo and rhythms in which we move and transform. ‘Information too takes various forms as it flows through voice, onto the TV screen, back into words that may get written down and so on. Or the same word may mean different things in different contexts’ (Hodder, 2012: 5). A thing is connected to different things according to the meaning projected onto it. If it is understood as a talisman, a tool, a sacred object, or ornament connects it to specific set of other things. Many things

have temporalities far beyond human beings. Natural things have their own movement, while human-made artefacts need human attention and care in order to be maintained and keep functioning in the ways humans meant them to. Humans live in a relationship of interdependency with things where we rely reciprocally on each other to function and keep moving and transforming.

The notion of interdependency that Hodder presents is also interesting to think of when performing **dramaturgy**. There is an obvious interdependency between the work of a dramaturg and all the other elements in the working context such as text, movement, sound, visuals, light, as well as all the food brought into rehearsal, all personal little objects humans use and surround themselves with, and all the conversations we undertake as we try to solve technical, practical or conceptual problems. A piece is built up by its dramaturgical structure and it is the dramaturg's job to care for this structure, to keep it vital and moving, sometimes by destabilizing it bringing in new things or discarding things already part of it. It is a process of change and transformation, and also of judgement and selection. The dramaturg can emphasise the importance of all the things that play a part in the rehearsal space in order to care for the material, be it a conversation over a cup of coffee or a cigarette, or a page in the text or a drawing or marking in the **score**. A dramaturgy never stays the same because things, buildings, thoughts, **conversations**, dreams, and texts are all fluid with their own temporality. The dramaturg needs to listen to the various elements and try to let the dramaturgical thing find its form taking into consideration the impossibility of understanding the full scope of what takes place. It is a process that takes **time** and demands **listening** to the rhythms things have, and how those rhythms change when encountering different things. Naturally there is a level of constructing as well, which is the interdependence Hodder refers to. It is a reciprocal movement between the sense of constructing and the way the material we work with

responds, what it asks for in order to keep moving and not become static in a captured image and idea about what certain things are. This is less of a conscious analytic process, but rather a practice of listening, being in touch, dialoguing with, sensing and being together in time and space, letting things fall in their temporal place.

Interdependency is especially pertinent when dealing with the documentary text and the **memory** of an informant. '[T]hings as we want them have limited ability to reproduce themselves, so in our dependence on them we become entrapped in their dependence on us' (Hodder, 2012: 88). It is interesting to think of the way our memory works as a 'thing', which we constantly try to re-create in order to keep our feeling of identity intact. While we create and recreate our memory of certain events, the memory also creates us. What is the temporality of memory and the stories it produces about our lives? These stories often outlive us as subjects and continue to be told in families after someone is dead. Or they are kept as a 'family secret' to be revealed at some later point in history; stories that have become mystified, preserved and objectified through being kept secret, often turning into obstacles in the family structure. This kind of materialization of memory into stories happens due to threads of entanglement. We work hard to keep things intact, to make them seem stable in order for us to understand them and make the relation with them simpler. But it takes quite some effort to keep things intelligible, and someone always has to work hard to produce a feeling of stability. What happens if we let things be, leaving them alone in transformation? Do they become *unstable*?

Interpretation

Interpretation is a common word when explaining originality in the arts. The interpretation of a known piece of music or a famous play is what the **audience** is looking for, which marks out the artist's level of originality. Interpretation can also be understood as a

‘dreaming with’ and further conceptualisation of a given material. Conceptualisation aims to add more images, words and thoughts to the material at hand, and for ways of expressing these to be explored by an artist. To interpret something as a process of artistic creation is to attach specific meaning to it, which could be more limiting than opening up to a broader range of encounters with a material. Interpretation is about making something intelligible. Instead of interpretation we could use the concept of ‘unfolding’ (Turner & Behrndt, 2008), which means getting to know something through a process of unpacking that is aware it will never be able to reveal anything completely, and acknowledging that a material can never be owned. Interpretation attaches thoughts and ideas to a material, while unfolding opens it up neither attaching nor taking anything away. Our brains are things that activate connections between things we perceive, continuously producing thoughts and constructing images. It is a flow that we cannot stop. However, we can avoid paying too much attention to the flow of thoughts and images, and by doing so it may be possible to sense and see something else. By not attaching to the imaginings of the brain, the things we relate to can to a larger extent come forward in their own being. In the attempt to avoid interpretation, it is easier to relate to the materiality of things.

Illusion

The word illusion is typically taken to mean self-betrayal, distortion of **reality**, or a false idea about how things really are. An optical illusion is when you see something different than what is really there, when you see a different form than what is actually present. The word is obviously linked to a normative idea of ‘truth’ and ‘reality’. However, when questioning the perceived dichotomy between ‘truth’ and ‘fiction’, the notion of illusion also changes. Buddhist philosophy thinks of material as illusion, simultaneously real and fictional. There is a saying that goes something like this: Things we perceive in this world are mere illusions, yet they appear. How extraordinary and magic that is. As a philosophy

of paradoxes and ambiguities, **Buddhism** has much in common with object-oriented ontology (**OOO**), especially in the way Timothy Morton speaks about it.

Morton claims that '[a]n object is not an illusion. But it is not a non-illusion' (2013: 76). According to object-oriented ontology objects withdraw, which means we can never **know** them fully. They are things that exist beyond our conceptualisation of them (and everything is an object in this regard), separate from each other and yet connected, leaving only aesthetic traces as a result of causality. It is a rift, writes Morton, between what we see and the essence of things, which he refers back to the concept of emptiness in Buddhism.

Emptiness is not the absence of something, but the nonconceptuality of reality: the real is beyond concept, because it is real [...] Causality, according to this view, is like a magical display - there is no physical reason why it is happening. Rather, the reason is aesthetic (magic, display). Furthermore the magical illusion happens all by itself, withdrawn from perception.

(Morton, 2013: 74)

Let us say that the recorded **voice** on the computer representing the conversation, which the dramaturg had with an informant telling about her childhood **abuse**, is a thing or an object, an aesthetic form being 'presenced' out of a situation, where impressions from an event in the past become translated via the sensory organs, **memory** and language. The sounds take form through a meeting with another body (the dramaturg) in a specific atmosphere (time, place — including a sofa in a room in a house etc.). The recording device captures those sounds. Later the sounds on the recording will be translated through **listening**, mixed up with the memory of the dramaturg at the time of recording, into **words** on paper that will eventually be spoken by another **body** and voice in a staged situation. Can we ever exhaust our understanding of this recording? Will what we hear only be an

illusion of what is really there? And is the recording itself only an illusion of the voice (and the memory) of the informant? Through the example of a black hole in the universe, Morton tries to explain how we can never access reality: ‘even if you could somehow climb into one [a black hole] with a video camera, you couldn’t know the whole story about black holes. Why? Because your video of a black hole is not a black hole. *Because black holes are real*’ (2013: 72). Consequentially, a theatre performance about child abuse using edited, or unedited recorded testimony of incidents of rape and abuse as text, does not represent the reality of abuse. *Because abuse is real*. However, the presentation is not *not* real either. **Documentary theatre** is, paradoxically, a real illusion.

Are the stories we tell from real life true and real? Is it possible to understand them, or at least parts of them, as illusions? How does memory work in our minds, how do our sense experiences distort reality through the ways in which we transform and interpret our experiences into intelligible words and stories? These are questions we need to deal with when working with stories from ‘real life’ and are exemplified in the quote below, from a person who suffered child abuse and then took her case to court:

[T]he trial also created a problem for me. Because we had to assemble evidence to prove a case, and that meant we had to tell a very specific story about rape, leaving out lots that happened, lots of abuse from other people, lots of memories. And now that specific story, which was quite true — and documented with all kinds of medical records and paediatrician’s reports saying ‘suspected sexual abuse’ and everything — that rape story is standing in the way of the whole story.

(Young-Bruehl, 2012: 64)

So what we perceive as real is an aesthetic dimension, which is a place of ‘real illusions’ according to Morton (2013: 18). This means that reality is ungraspable as such. What we can perceive is only the illusion of it that we take for being real. The point is that the

binary between what is called reality and illusion seems to break down. What object-oriented philosophy and ontology offer is the questioning of the distinction between those terms, which is interesting for the field of theatre—and especially documentary theatre—making it less obvious, and perhaps more interesting, as to what is real and what is illusion. The world around us can thus be understood as a miracle, as what Morton calls ‘realist magic’ (2013).

Instructions for Forgetting

In the performance *Instructions for Forgetting* from 2001, Tim Etchells from Forced Entertainment is seated at a table close to the **audience**. There are a bunch of papers on the table, a microphone, and a bottle. At the back of the stage Richard Lowdon is seated surrounded by monitors, VCRs, cables, and a stack of videotapes to be played on a screen at the back wall of the stage. The performance was never labelled documentary. However, it presumably consists of stories and documentary video material sent to Etchells by friends and colleagues telling of real life events. Etchells has carefully edited and cut these together to form the text of the performance. He explains in the beginning:

I ask my friends to send stories and videotapes. For the stories I ask for things that are true. The topics can be anything. I ask for short reports on things that have happened in the world. For the tapes I say: Don’t make me anything special—send me what you have.

(Forced Entertainment, 2015)

The piece presents these documents and pieces of material in the form of a collection shaping a **thing**, which is the performance, without trying to make sense of them, or connect them into a linear narrative. In fact, ‘jump cut’ is textually used as a way to move from one thing to the next. In *Instructions for Forgetting* the company explores, as they often do, things as containers of images and memories. It can be props, costumes,

cardboard signs, fragments of text, jokes, or as here letters and videotapes. The company often improvises during long hours of performing, leaving it up to the audience watching to connect the various things presented on stage. All those things are subject to **interpretation** and re-interpretation, imagining, storytelling and speculation. In *Instructions for Forgetting*, the written stories and videotapes are not given much theatrical imagery, such as set design or costumes, to enhance an interpretative frame. The setup is simple, as explained above, leaving the material to speak for itself or rather in encounter with Etchells' relationship to and play with them. Are the stories we hear and videotapes we see real or fictional? Perhaps they are neither. They are simply things standing in relation to other things, including human bodies, their thoughts, feelings, dreams, and sensations. The things form the artists of Forced Entertainment, the performance, and the audience as much as they are formed and given meaning through the process of creation and re-creation

J

K

Know

The title of the performance by Forced Entertainment *Instructions for Forgetting*, suggests the ambiguity, or the tension, between remembering and forgetting. We tell stories in order to remember. However, every story leaves other things outside that will be forgotten.

Object-oriented philosophy claims that objects and things have a side that is **withdrawn** and one that is revealed to us. Each **thing** has something known and something **unknown** to us, which implies that we can never understand or know something completely. There will always be a level of **interpretation** in the way we relate to things, and as Timothy Morton explains interpretation is connected to conceptualisation thus creating what he calls

‘real illusions’. When seeing something we think it is real. However, ‘[e]very seeing, every measurement, is also an adjustment, a parody, a translation, an interpretation. A tune and a tuning’ (Morton, 2013: 33). To know something is always partial and never complete. Knowing also implies not knowing.

L

Listening

What is the difference between reading a text about the testimony of **abuse**, and hearing it spoken? If we think of the text and the story it tells as an object or a **thing**, then according to Salomé Voegelin sound renders the object dynamic. It sets it in motion. Reading is another way of listening, which also sets the words in motion but more internally. The **speaking** gives sounds to the **words**, which blend and resonate with other sounds and things outside the **body**. A reading body of course also hears outside sounds while reading, but the text is still heard in a different relationship to other things than if it is spoken.

Sounds shape our **reality**, even if we are not aware of them through active listening.

Voegelin writes about sound art, and is interested in the relationship between the sonic and the visual. She argues that listening is about relating to ‘the dynamic nature of things’ (2010: 12) that renders what is perceived as a stable object unstable, fluid and ephemeral. Listening questions our perception of the world and demonstrates that what we see is not necessarily the reality we think we **know**, because as Voegelin points out ‘[b]etween my heard and the sonic object/phenomenon I will never know its truth but can only invent it, producing a knowing for me’ (5).

If we imagine approaching a documentary text as a thing or an object, attempting to avoid intellectual **interpretation**, it would be necessary to find another way of working

practically with the text other than analysis and strategies of identification. Throughout this research it has been valuable to work with the text as a sound score where the actor can play with a variety of **rhythms**, intensities, tempos, pitch etc. It involves working with breaks and pauses where the breath is an important tool to engage actively with. This work demands a certain kind of listening: not only listening to concrete sounds, but also listening to the text as a thing in itself, giving it space and **time** to unfold. It is a form of listening that is needed in order to let the thing be, relating to it as something with its own agency equal to the human body and consciousness. It is a listening that involves all senses. In his book *Listening* Jean-Luc Nancy asks:

What does it mean for a being to be immersed entirely in listening, formed by listening or in listening, listening with all his being? [...] What secret is at stake when one truly *listens*, that is, when one tries to capture or surprise the sonority rather than the message?

(Nancy, 2007:4-5)

The answer to this lies among other things in the bodily experience of rhythms, which are perceived not only by the ears but also by the eyes, muscles, skin, and nervous system. Nancy writes about the concept of listening in which the subject is understood to be in a process of constant dissolution and reformation. For Nancy listening means to be penetrated by spatiality and all that it contains. When describing a certain kind of listening that searches for what precedes meaning, he also writes about sonority, what he calls timbre, and sense. This sonority, which always surrounds us, is not yet given form or captured by meaning; it escapes language. This kind of listening is part of daily **conversation**: when we talk to each other, the speaking travels so fast that we are often unable to immediately catch the meaning of all the words or understand their content. Attempting to hear what is spoken, we also listen for sonority, aided in its deciphering by what the other person transmits through his or her physical presence. We are listening on

many levels simultaneously, noticing formations that have not yet appeared but which are present as potentials, sensing the **unknowns**.

Nancy calls this kind of listening ‘stretching the ear’. The process involves striving for an interpretation that is not directly accessible but requires care, inquisitiveness, a desire for intensification, and agitation. This is not a psychological approach to what is understood as ‘subtext’ in classical theatre, involving instead a completely different understanding of subject and character. It is a form of listening that is about relating to a ‘self’ (one’s own self and others’) while recognizing a relationship that exists between all listeners. A ‘self’ is something different from both character and ‘I’—it is less defined, more fluid. Listening to rhythm, music, or sound in the broadest sense means allowing oneself to be penetrated, and to a certain extent dissolved into a broader state of becoming. Nancy describes this as follows:

To listen is to enter that spatiality by which, at the same time, I am penetrated, for it opens up in me as well as around me, and from me as well as toward me: it opens me inside me as well as outside, and it is through such a double, quadruple, or sextuple opening that a “self” can take place. To be listening is to be at the same time inside and outside, to be open from without and from within, hence from one to the other and from one in the other.

(Nancy, 2007: 14)

When Nancy turns to speaking, he is concerned with rhythm and timbre as being the music in the text to which one must listen to in order to catch the not yet articulated. Timbre, he explains, is ‘communication of the incommunicable’ (2007: 41), which turns communication into ‘that thing by which a subject makes an echo — of self, or the other, it’s all one — it’s all one in the plural’ (41). Roland Barthes questions the way language

subjectifies music in most interpretations and critique of music (1977b). He introduces what he calls the *grain* of the **voice**, which he argues is ‘a dual production — of language and of music’ (181), it is not merely the timbre. The grain as a sound is both material and abstract. It is perhaps the thing-quality of the articulation? The voice, Barthes writes, ‘has no civil identity, no ‘personality’, but [which] is nevertheless a separate body’ (182). To listen to the grain in a voice means to hear the infinite space of the body that produces the sound, and simultaneously the process of writing the sound into signification. To listen to the relation between sounding bodies is not to reinforce or express a subject but ‘on the contrary, to lose it’ (188). Listening to the text as thing is an attempt to hear the rhythm, timbre and grain it produces in the voice. The question is how to perform the text in such a listening mode? When an **actor** or a performer speaks a documentary text on stage—one that is related to a real life experience by someone who may be sitting in the audience—this research has led to experimentation with distance and listening. Instead of trying to identify with and embody the text, the performer would work on using the text as a thing floating in between one self and the present **audience** as a soundscape bridging the space of communication. Working on detaching from the word-sounds that have just left your body allows for a listening back to what happens when the uttered words blend in with other sounds. This potentially opens up for other meanings in the moment than the immediate interpretation of the words coloured by preconceived cultural norms, personal values, and ideas of reality. The rhythmical breaks and silences in the speaking, enhanced by working with breath, tempo, intensities etc. give time and space for the listening of both performer and audience as a way to relate on an abstract or metaphysical level through the material (physical) encounter. It is by seeing the text as a thing in itself free from any body, that it can be shared and the experiences it speaks back to can begin to vibrate into a larger community. This includes dance and choreographic movement understood as text.

What **dancer** Henriette Slorer is working with in *Childism* connects strongly to the discourse on listening. She uses her sensory abilities to become penetrated in the way Nancy describes listening above. She lets the testimonies and material of *Childism* enter and exit her body in an on-going dialogue; she allows her body and movements to be affected and formed by these impressions, as much as she then gives it a form in the space. In this context dance offers a form, a ‘presencing’, and a coming into being of the documentary material different from that of the spoken word. The movements give form to the experiences that cannot be verbally expressed, and they do so through the process of listening working with rhythm, pauses, breaks, and breath. It is the dancer’s continuous relation with the given material that is expressed through exploring how the material touches the moving body both physically and emotionally. She demonstrates the connective area between the sounds of her body moving, and the voice writing the words in the space somehow translating the movements to the audience by repeating them through words. Her moving body and voice expresses the grain as she writes the sounds into signification. These movements between abstract and concrete meaning constitute a process, one where the dancer also tries to understand and explain to herself what is happening in her own body. The listening that is practiced in the movement opens up to letting the material be ventilated in the space, freeing the unspoken that has been locked away. The informant herself expressed a level of recognition in the choreographic expression of Slorer’s dance.

What Nancy describes is a phenomenon of listening that he experiences is taking place. His phenomenological writing on listening is used in this context related to object-oriented philosophy, suggesting it demands a paradigmatic shift in how we seek to understand ourselves, and our connections in the world. What Nancy describes may be a reality reachable for us all. However, most of us do not have the habit and consciousness of

listening in this sense. It needs practice as much as perceiving the world as object-oriented or 'thingified' takes practice. The way we think about things affect how we experience being in **relation**. What is proposed here is a practice of thinking and experiencing, which demands paying our senses greater attention and further consider movements that oscillate, like breath, between the inside of our body and the outside world. If a text (spoken or moved) is a thing, it has sides that can be known and revealed, but it also has sides that are unknown, hidden and concealed from the things in which it stands in relation. So when listening and working with a text as a thing, we would need to always bear in mind that what we hear and understand is never the reality that the text refers to. Instead, the text has its own reality. The question is: are we able, as performers or dramaturges, to listen and relate to the unspoken that resides within the spoken words, or the still unreachable of the moved silences?

Leaving alone

When working on a documentary text, this research operates with the idea of leaving the material alone. To leave something alone is about attempting to not explain and to conceptualize as little as possible, which includes not imagining what the experience the text refers to could have been like. The leaving alone is to register a phenomenon and then let it go, which is the training in much meditation practices. 'Meditation for instance, could be defined as a leaving-alone of objects. This leaving-alone is an omission that has real effects. By allowing objects to remain inconsistent, rather than reducing them to appearance (for me), I act nonviolently' (Morton, 2013: 71). Leaving a text (spoken or danced) alone is to trust it will communicate what it needs to without further mental explanations. In *Childism* when the **dancer** moves and speaks, she connects the two texts (the choreographic and the spoken) but leave each of them alone and separate from each other. It is in the **relation** between them that she hopes to find meaning. If the actor or

dancer leaves the documentary text alone, it implies an attempt to minimise the amount of **interpretation**, of imagining, and judging what it speaks of and may imply. Our minds are trained to quickly classify and grasp the meaning of anything perceived, be it things in front of our eyes or **words** heard. We have a strong impulse to understand, classify and thus capture and be in control. Leaving alone a text, or any other thing for that matter, does not mean to shut out thoughts or emotions that arise in the moment of **speaking** or moving the text. But it means to not grasp those movements and attach them as some kind of temporary truth about what the text is or means. It is about staying with the text in the present without calculating its consequences in the future. What arises in the moment of speaking should be acknowledged and let go, because thoughts and feelings are fleeting matter always moving, transforming and changing. That movement is what relation and aliveness is about. However, in the encounter with a text the performer or listener needs to take responsibility for his or her own thinking and feeling, and not project it onto the text with a wish to reveal its perceived **reality**. This is a continuous process of detachment, giving space and distancing oneself from the material.

List

This writing is a list consisting amongst other things of several other lists.

List of Loss

(preferably read out loud)

Each of the **collaborators** in the project *Encountering Loss* wrote a **list** of things they have lost, which was performed at the opening of the second presentation in August 2013.

Mobile phones, wallets, bags, solitary socks, sunglasses, umbrellas, belts, keys, balance, my temper, necklace from great grandfather, necklace from mom, rings, earrings, bracelets, bed sheets, Findus, Proffen, Snow white, goldfish, watches,

raingear, woollen sweaters, underwear, rain boots, hats, scarves, gloves, jackets, joy of playing, suitcase, tent, mattress, sleeping bags, shoes, clothes, feeling of security, Utøya, my mother's rain gear, pillows, blankets, iPod, grandmother, grandfather, father, Julia, Elisabeth, Torjus, Tore.

Keys, friends, family, favourite teddy bear, cat, football games, face, interviews, tennis matches, belief in our political system, belief in our economical system, belief that anyone really has the answers, belief that those who are leaders should be leaders, belief in authorities, belief in what represents reality, belief in myself as something more unique than any other natural event, belief in society's definition of success, belief in where I am, belief in faith, innocence, time, possibilities, illusions, hope, prejudices.

Friends, dreams, possibilities, love, mobile phones, grandfather, hope, three dogs, belief in real friendship, and in the Norwegian school system, time, favourite sweater, my father, money, wallets, patience, sunglasses, my rabbit.

Childhood, mobile phone, keys, friendship, fights, love, identity, money, innocence.

My temper, iPhone, grandfather, Lego, distance, friends, façade, respect, honesty.

Money, telephones, keys, wallets, bus cards, two cats, two rabbits, one hamster, a silver jewellery, grandparents, contact with cousins, friends, interests, contact with family in Vietnam, my temper, teeth, father.

Grandfather, my green tricycle, grandmother, my rabbit Sandy, uncle, my appendix, teeth, Aunt Johanna, childhood, virginity, belief in Santa Claus, iPhone, identity, great grandmother, image of the future, friends.

M

Murmur

We are always surrounded by sounds as much as we are surrounded by visual information.

However, in our present culture the visual has a privileged position. We are often not

aware of the way in which sounds affect our perception and being in the world. Sound renders the visual three-dimensional and places it in **time** and space. When experiencing an event, we rarely think of ‘an event heard’ because ‘hearing is full of doubt’ (Voegelin, 2010: xii). According to Alphonso Lingis: communication is the practice of abstraction (1994). It is to be able to abstract **words** from the huge background of sounds constantly surrounding us. It is to be able to give the sound of particular words meaning amidst infinite other signals emitted to us and surrounding us at any moment in time. Lingis says that ‘to eliminate the noise is to have successfully received the message’ (81). Communication then creates a community, big or small, able to **silence** the rumble of the world for a moment. In Lingis’ understanding of the murmur words are heard and voiced through a process of revealing themselves, of protruding out of what he calls ‘the humming, buzzing, murmuring, crackling, and roaring of the world’ (84). Thus communication always entails silencing and battling with other sounds that obscure the communication. Consequently, in communication we win some understanding and we lose other potential fields of meaning. Lingis is interested in a materialist approach that does not discriminate between sounds or place them into a hierarchical system of meaning, but considers all sounds equally important as communicative entities. In this image of communication words can be understood as things. This supports the thinking of documentary text material as only partially factual and the words the text communicates in performance as only partially known. It reflects how performing documentary text is a matter of **ethics**, which can never be ‘truthful’ because the text, even when it is transcribed from a moment of testimony, involves choosing some sounds at the cost of others. Can we speak of choreographic text as factual or fictional? Movement in the context of *Childism* is neither, however, clearly communicating something only partly known. Then what is it? The choreographic text can instead be seen as things moving between bodies performing

and spectating in a reciprocal coming into being of all those bodies through cause and effect, or what Morton sees as aesthetic traces.

Jean-Luc Nancy's thoughts about *Mute Music* connect to Lingis' perspective on communication. Both have inspired ways of treating documentary text in this research project. *Mute Music* is a term that is connected to notions of murmur, muttering, mumbling, moan, whispering, gouching etc. Nancy also makes a point in his book of connecting it to the movements of lips and the mouth supporting the argument that touching the text is about touching the sound with vocal cords, lips, and tongue. Nancy takes this kind of sound as the starting point of all words and all silences. It represents a resonance of life itself, or to the self according to Nancy, generated through **listening**. It is a sense of listening to sounds that starts before words are shaped into meaning. The point here is that the text as **thing** has a known side, which is the words we literally understand, but that it also has an **unknown** side, which is the spaces between the words, the sounds in the beginning and end of a word, the sounds around and inside the text itself. To be sensing sound, claims Nancy, 'consist first of all, not in signifying intention but rather in a listening' (2007: 30). Here Nancy and Lingis seem to be quite in tune:

The one who understands is not extracting the abstract form out of the tone, the rhythm, and the cadences-the noise internal to the utterance, the cacophony internal to the emission of the message. He or she is also listening to that internal noise-the rasping or smoldering breath, the hyperventilating or somnolent lungs, the rumblings and internal echoes-in which the message is particularized and materialized and in which the empirical reality of something indefinitely discernible, encountered in the path of one's own life, is referred to and communicated.

(Lingis, 1994: 91)

For Lingis everything is connected via sounds and vibrations, which would include movement. He opposes communication theory's idea to decompose the murmur of the world into particles of sound that they classify as irrelevant, or that stands in conflict to each other. Instead Lingis argues that the background noise figures as resonance and vocalisation without any message. 'It is out of and in the midst of the reverberation of ambient materiality that the utterances we make get shaped, and they get sent forth to return it' (1994: 104). What Lingis calls the murmur of the world is perhaps to be linked to that tissue or mesh, which many object-oriented philosophers (Harman, Morton) identify as that something through which things and objects relate and are interconnected.

Memory

Documentary theatre always works with memory. The memory of informants, or the memories that any chosen **document** awakens. Is memory a **thing**, or in this context, is the memory of an event a document?



(drawing from a notebook during the production of *WOE*)

Michael Taussig writes about the drawings he makes in his anthropological field diaries in the book *I Swear I Saw This* (2011). He also addresses the question of memory and what can be captured in a drawing as opposed to notes and written **words**, which becomes a text retelling an experience. The drawing, Taussig argues, calls on something more than the mere story of what happened. It calls on an atmosphere. It reflects a notion of seeing that resembles Nancy's notion of **listening**. Taussig also introduces doubt as a quality, which is always part of a representation of something that happened in the past. How can we be sure we are transmitting any kind of 'truth' of what happened, and how can we be certain about anything in a world of floating things in transformation? If the rehearsal space is the anthropological field site, perhaps the dramaturg can be looked upon as an artist-anthropologist? Very often the dramaturg writes, brings in pictures, or draws in his or her field diary. The making of a piece can also be perceived as an activity of drawing. Drawing may happen through **conversation**. The dramaturg is assisting in drawing live images, and the performance itself can be compared to the drawings in Taussig's field diary. The dramaturgical thing is an activity of drawing that comes across as a collection suggesting 'a world beyond, a world that does not have to be explicitly recorded and is in fact all the more "complete" because it cannot be completed. In pointing away from the real, they capture something invisible' (Taussig, 2011: 13). Creating images of what has been seen belongs to the world of play.

The two projects *WOE* and *Childism* are based on, dependent on, and entangled with the stories formed by memory of one specific informant. In trauma theory, referring for instance to Freud, Lacan and Bracha Ettinger, there is a notion of the *thing* signifying the experience partly known, partly **unknown** to the subject who has been traumatized. Here the *thing* may be compared to the void in the jug that Heidegger refers to in his analysis of the thing (2001: 167). It is a kind of no-thing, an emptiness, a darkened space in memory

that still shapes the vase or the psychic body of the subject. Similar to the way Heidegger emphasises the quality of things, trauma is also characterized by being partly revealed and partly **withdrawn** or concealed. '[T]rauma is the radical and irreducible other of representation, the other of the subject and, as thing, cannot thus become something' (Pollock, 2009: 42). Similarly, our informant explained that there were several stories that were difficult to piece together. Certain things in life do not make sense or provide coherence, they are simply not intelligible. Our informant explained how there will always be gaps and hidden aspects of the story inaccessible and perhaps even unknown. In the best case, a performance like *WOE* or *Childism* as a work of art can as Bracha Ettinger puts it, be 'a working-through and bringing-into-being of that which cannot be remembered. An event unremembered — yet that cannot be forgotten — is located in a transsubjective border space' (Ettinger, 2007: 163). Perhaps the **presentation** is what Ettinger calls 'the poetic non-place', a border space or a thing in the way Tristan Garcia (2014) sees it; a liminal thing formed by that which is in it and that which it is in, where the *things* of trauma can be shared and co-emerge?

Traumatic experiences lie beyond language. Our informant said that in many ways any verbalisation of the event felt like a betrayal, because of the impossibility to shape the experience into verbal language and an intelligible story. Simultaneously, the social, juridical and political systems of society demand this kind of intelligible story in order to be able to relate to it as 'truth'. In her late teens the informant went through a court case related to her childhood **abuse**. Her attorney advised her to focus on certain aspects of the abuse, and leave other things out of the story in order to prove a believable case in court. This turns back to the question of evidence, documents, and the truth-value of such things. Giorgio Agamben (1999) has written about testimony, witnessing, and the archive, especially in relation to the holocaust, and argues that the 'true' witness is the one who did

not survive. Some experiences are unimaginable, or as Mark Twain wrote: ‘truth is stranger than fiction, but it is because fiction is obliged to stick to possibilities; truth isn’t’ (1897: 156). Thus we are not able to imagine the real; instead, we make fiction intelligible as a way to understand what cannot be understood. Agamben writes: ‘facts so real that, by comparison, nothing is truer; a reality that necessarily exceeds its factual elements’ (1999: 12). When the stories from the concentration camps started leaking out to the public, they were too horrible to believe even with photographic documentation of the atrocities. With reference to the court case of our informant, Agamben argues that the court does not aim at establishing justice or prove truth; it is solely interested in judgement according to law (19). Agamben writes that his book is an attempt to listen to the absence, that which cannot be told because the **survivors**, the witnesses are bearing witness to something that is impossible to bear witness to, something unbelievable thus impossible to see (13). The work with *WOE* and *Childism* is a similar attempt to listen, relate and spend **time** with that which seems like fiction but is in fact an absent **reality** lost in memory and impossible to speak. Agamben problematizes the figure of the witness whose story is most often regarded as a document. Or, more precisely, the recording or the written words from that story are understood as a document. He speaks of the remnant, which is a thing left from an event and rendered into a document, a memory, or an image of what took place. The remnant, according to Agamben, is not a part of a whole but indicates a caesura, a break, a gap, or a silent pause, which is the place of contact between the part and the whole. In this sense the testimony is the silent memory. How can one witness such **silence**? From the practice of performance-making, we suggest that audiences and artists alike can spend time with it, listen to it, hang out with it, and let it be in order to speak: ‘the task of bearing witness in the name of those who cannot speak reveals that the task of bearing witness is at base a task of bearing witness to the impossibility of witnessing’ (Mills, 2003, unpag.).

Any retelling of an event or experience is *one* story out of many possible reconstructions of what took place. There are many stories, all of them real *and* fictional, because any story of an event, just like memory, is edited and not able to hold the complexity of what took place. Just like this writing reflects a series of occasions, moments, discussions, readings, decisions, events, rehearsals, laughter, and sharing of food and more, it is a thing formed by those experiences. Each story about an event can never tell the truth by itself; it is impossible to create one comprehensible story. The traumatic event is the *thing*, which according to Bracha Ettinger, is ‘aching, and we do not know where it hurts and that *it* hurts. It struggles unsuccessfully to re-approach psychic awareness, but only finds momentary relief in symptomatic repetitions’ (Ettinger, 1999: 89). Cathy Caruth supports this unknown of trauma when she writes that what haunts the **victim** is not only the traces of violence, but is also ‘the reality of the way that its violence has not yet been fully known’ (1996: 6). The story of trauma is always a belated experience, where reality may occur in a collection of flashes, through the telling — or performing — of the thing left in memory after the event. The question of what to tell (and not tell) to an audience in the theatrical works of *WOE* and *Childism* was an important ethical question, one related to how to speak about the experience of trauma in a way that could open up a space for relating to the topic of child abuse. One important task in that context was to move away from the idea that this is ‘partly real and partly fictional’. These concepts seem less constructive and this research proposes to see memory and its relation to events in the past, as well as the presentation in a theatre or performance context, equally as things.

Another story of child abuse was introduced during the work with *WOE*; that of a Norwegian boy aged eight who died from severe abuse. The facts around this case were retrieved solely from news clips and a book written about the case. In order to control and simplify the information to the three young performers in the production, the director and

the dramaturg thought we needed to create *one* story to present to them as our ‘documentary material’. We called it ‘the story’, which was constructed and woven together from facts and conversations about the two real-life stories we used as material. ‘The story’ was not to be performed, but was the background story to which the script would presumably refer. The dramaturg became responsible for writing this story. It constantly evolved and expanded as we had continuous conversations with our informant, and it needed to relate to the needs of the **dramaturgy** of the script and the performance. At the time, the dramaturg felt a huge amount of respect towards what she thought was being truthful to our sources. She thought there was still something ‘true’ that could be transferred to the stage, and that it would be possible to do this as something not stained by us who created the piece, or the context we were producing it in. She found it difficult to make one story out of two, serving specific dramaturgical demands. She felt she created fiction, she felt she betrayed not only the two subjects who experienced the trauma, but also the idea of presenting something as documentary theatre. She realized, however, that all retelling holds a level of fictional construction because remembering is always rearranging memory. Was she in fact creating a document of child abuse? Is a document not always reflecting an experienced reality in a fictional or constructed form? The story was finally dropped as a reference point and never introduced to the performers, because it did not serve any purpose. The script used in the performance was enough as a document – neither true nor false. It is a document, a thing in itself, with its own agenda and knowledge. It has found its shape in **relation** to a series of other documents recalling those specific lived experiences, as well as in relation to the director, dramaturg, performers and many other things. It is a document of child abuse detached but still related to those two specific life stories, as well as possibly many other stories of abuse. It circles more around issues of how a child living under conditions of daily abuse experiences and creates his or her concept of reality, than it refers to any concrete witnessing of specific abuse.

We were convinced early in the process that we should not be explicit about abuse in the text of *WOE*, mainly reflecting the unspeakable aspects of trauma. So, how do you represent the unspeakable? Caruth suggests that ‘the possibility of this knowledge [to know what consciousness can not formulate] can only arise within the very act of its denial...’ (1996: 37). It means that not mentioning or not bringing into active memory can be a necessary part of understanding. In the performance *WOE*, the three young performers’ insisting invitation to the audience to imagine incidents of abuse—while never depicting anything concrete, except for the traces and damage—is an attempt to get closer to the unimaginable. The performance is much about memory, asking the audience to remember their own childhood and the experience of reality from that perspective. This was repeated in *Childism*, but combined with retellings of concrete scenes of rape. However, as has been argued, there are always aspects of denial or expulsion of things that are not told and given form.

What the three performers in *WOE* came to represent in the mere fact of their still-young bodies being present on stage, is that ‘trauma is not simply an effect of destruction but also, fundamentally, an enigma of survival’ (Caruth, 1996: 58). However, the informant herself, when seeing the piece, felt it was ‘too nice’ (Anonymous: 2013b). Working with trained adult performers in *Childism*, we explored how to stage, perform and speak more explicitly about concrete incidents of abuse. Because these things were impossible for the informant to formulate, we ended up constructing a fictional document. A text that represents the images we as performers and dramaturg carry after having dealt with, listened to, spent time with and related to the informant: her body, her things, and her words. This text also represents our feeling at a certain moment and our need to express

something of what we experience when **listening** to the silent absences. As text, this story is a thing entangled with all the bodies and things that forms part of the process.

A small child placed on a bed, familiar sound from the open belt and pants of a man, oil in a plastic bag to lubricate her little vagina. Heavy, hectic, hot pain, so much pain. Not only him, but dragging out the fucking time by playing with objects. Blood, oil, grease... Inserting things like a fork, a stick, a glass, a dildo inserted into her, making her feel numb, making her feel her body was not hers. So she left. Through a symbol in her mind her spirit travelled. Perhaps that is what saved her?

He was gone too, he was lost in his own loneliness, there was no point of contact. Just flesh against flesh, pounding. A big body on top of a small one. Pushing, pushing, so hard she thought she would explode, that her body would rip apart, split into two pieces. Afterwards she was feeling like shit, she had to shit at the toilet, but he said it was only her feeling his cock inside her.

(Childism, 2015)

empty space (pause) ...

Creating fictional documents within an artistic context that claims to be documentary can represent the complexity of reality differently, but as truthfully, as all the certified or factual documents used in juridical or political contexts. The point is that there is not really any division between the factual and fictional document, which theatre and performance are able to point out, because they are public arenas that have the freedom to play with both types of documents to prove that point. The result is neither ‘false’ nor ‘true’, but perhaps closer to presenting the complexities of reality. The fictional text above seems to represent the reality of an experience that many children suffer. It is a reality that has been shaped in and through the scriptor who has been relating to the sounds, images, and sensual impressions with which she has spent time throughout many years. Spending time together with the informant, the collaborators, books, recordings, and many other things, the scriptor has been listening, touching, feeling, laughing, crying, and talking. In the text there are fragments of words derived directly from the memory of the informant, standing in relation to words depicting what stays in the scriptor’s own **body** as listener, friend, collaborator, artist, and fellow human being.

How can any document, especially those produced by memory, be considered ‘true’ or factual when we know how fleeting memory is? Recalling one’s own childhood, it can be difficult to know how much is sensorial memory of actual events and how much are memory images built around iconic family photographs we have seen repeatedly when growing up. Perhaps those photographic things merge and become part of the physical memory traces and sensations we have of our past? It is sometimes difficult to differentiate between memory and reverie, and we may have problems trusting where our memory stems from. For people who have experienced trauma, it is often particularly difficult to trust their memory, because the past is ridden with guilt and shame, with the unintelligible images of sudden pain or loss, and of other people’s interfering and manipulation into what

has really taken place. Memories, like everything else, are things entangled and connected to other things being formed by them, and forming them reciprocally. What we as humans are able to imagine creates our physical world—it is from these mental images we create reality. Any artefact—all social and political structures—started as a thought, a dream, a vision in someone’s imagination. Images are neither true nor false; if they reside in our minds, on a photograph, as a sketch, drawing or painting, as words written or uttered, or as a dream image—they are all things that have the potential to become materialised. The materialist practice of staging documents presented in this research focuses mainly on texts and images drawn from memory. Thus, it does not present a practice as a neutral, horizontal listening to all materials entangled into the creation process. To a large extent, the practice takes memory as its focal point of reference. This implies that it is the mental things, the ways in which our mind translates and is able to communicate experiences, that has a privileged position amongst all other things involved in the process. However, these memories understood as things, are documents that call for us to relate to more than the mental images themselves. They take up a call of numerous other things with which those memories are entangled.

Memory is a creative act, a performance, write Liedeke Plate and Anneke Smelik (2013: 2). The archive is obsessed with storing memory. However, it often has problems containing memory in documents, because memory is spatial, embodied, and performative. Plate and Smelik argue that to train memory, we most often place things in mental and imagined spaces and images. Memory only exists in the present when it is performed. Memory is work and a practice; thus, memory has agency. Memory is ‘intimately connected with making, with narrating, telling and writing — in short, with the act of creation’ (4). Remembering is performative in the sense that it acts out a relationship to the past in the present. The two authors claim that cultural memory ‘has normative and formative powers’ (5) since it is an active part in shaping identity and culture within social

groups from families to society, and thus also on an individual level. In return, memory is shaped by its context. What we find is a situation where memory, culture and society reciprocally shape each other interdependently. This is what gives memory agency, and it matters how memory is performed and re-performed in culture. Perhaps what we are aspiring to do when creating documentary theatre is to unsettle the present by bringing back the past in a hope to influence the future? On the other hand, time is a construction that we have created as a way to manage our experience of existence. So if there is no past, present or future, memory is something of the now since that would be all we have. In the case of documentary theatre this would mean that the collection of stories and words are the aesthetic traces of causality being formed by the encounter between things (including specific people and their bodies) in rehearsal and performance. As such memory performed can be understood as real magic or realist magic (Morton, 2013).

N

Nomadic Dramaturg

Viewing **dramaturgy** as a **thing** suggests a working **ethics**, which challenges ways of artistic collaborations and our understanding of art and its possible functions. It aims at a sustainable exchange between things, including humans. Working with dramaturgy understood as a thing involves affect, bodies, and the ways in which we move and position ourselves towards one another and our surrounding contexts. The proposal here is to explore the idea of a nomadic dramaturg(y) inspired by Rosi Braidotti's writings on the nomadic subject.

[The nomadic subject] 'seeks for sustainable alternatives and affirmative modes of engagement in the present by linking the act of thinking to the creation of new concepts and critique to creation.'

(Braidotti, 2011: 8)

Braidotti's nomadic theory is a suggestion of how to deal in a sustainable way with the concrete outward nomadic activity of contemporary life, and global society (and art), in a rapidly changing, technologically mediated world. The point is that it is rather the *thinking* that should be nomadic in preference to physically moving about. Nomadic theory articulates a different notion of the subject and subject formation, where engendering and sustaining processes of 'becoming' are central to form the base for thinking an 'alternative foundation for ethical and political subjectivity' (Braidotti, 2011: 11). Braidotti argues for a nomadic subject as one in constant flux, engaged in dynamic power relations and always intrinsically other. This approach to performance-making would imply less stable positions inside a working collective. It would challenge the way artists use, cite and transform the material they work with, as well as their relationship to sources, informants and audiences. It opens up for a relational space where the way we are positioned towards each other and the things and material that we are working with shifts constantly, thus questioning power positions and what and who are inside or outside the collective process. It involves a flexible mind and ability to adapt and change quickly in response to the fast-moving, mediated **reality**, where doing also is a way of thinking. Working ethically within Braidotti's conception of nomadism is not about physically travelling, but rather about deep transformational processes instigated by a willingness to encounter materials and humans equally, listen to them, respond and risk to be changed by the relations evolving over **time**.

The research-dramaturg in this project experiences her work to a large extent to be about negotiation, always changing position in **relation** to the overall artistic process as well as the material, trying to see it always from new and different angles, thus also challenging power structures. Additionally, as has been argued strongly for instance by Turner and Behrndt (2008), the dramaturg seems to occupy an in-between position in an artistic

collective, thus often being annoyingly in the way or never there when needed. The dramaturg could sometimes be seen as being the ‘other’ of the group, not totally inside nor outside. She sometimes moves to the edges of the collaborative process and sometimes places herself in the midst of the creative work, letting the materials and activity penetrate her **body** and senses in a form of **listening** activity. It is a listening that sometimes results in **silences** and at other times complex verbalisations, suggestions, and provocative proposals that has as its purpose to poke on a process of finding a more stable structure for a performance. Still the labour of the dramaturg is mostly invisible. It is difficult to pinpoint the concrete contribution to a performance piece given by the dramaturg; she or he does not have a clear position, and often everyone involved including the dramaturg herself finds it difficult to explain the work of the dramaturg. The power of the role of the dramaturg is exactly the lack of power of decisions, but still with a great possibility of influencing decisions, however rarely mentioned in the reviews of a piece.

Power is usually dependent on the stability of clearly defined positions. However, the person that is difficult to place, like the trickster or the joker, holds a certain manipulative power. It is precisely this lack of power to make decisions which gives the freedom to provoke with difficult questions, starting new thought processes to test out different possibilities. This can be seen as a manipulative activity, one that can be motivated from the care for the dramaturgical thing and the material at hand, or from an ego-driven place where the desire is to convince and get your own opinions and visions through. When the dramaturg moves onto the stage, however, she gains power to make decisions in the moments of performing that removes some of this freedom. The nomadic subject, though, will be motivated by a strong will to change the way relations between things function questioning an anthropocentric structure, relating to other beings and materials rather than defining them. The foundation is not primarily the **interpretation** and structure of the text

but rather to sense, capture, and find structure in the **rhythms**, energies and atmospheres appearing and disappearing throughout the work and how all things influence the process.



Narrative

Dealing with archival material during this research has called upon a structure consisting of a collection of things existing in proximity to each other. As a dramaturgical structure, this form allows space for the rifts, the gaps, the **silences**, and the unspoken of the real events we are dealing with. Any collection of things will create some kind of narrative. Rather than creating a linear and comprehensive narrative that excludes what falls outside it and directs the perception of the audience to a greater degree, a collection opens up possibilities for **unknown** and unarticulated narratives offering a range of different **interpretations**. Below is the collection we ended up with on the first presentation of *Encountering Loss* (23rd February, 2013)

- WELCOME (PRACTICAL INFO/ SIMON — SHORT ABOUT THE PLAY AND THE THEME WE HAVE BEEN WORKING WITH /JUSTINE)
- READING OUT NAMES (placed around the room)
- FROM THE PLAY, SCENE: “FILM SHOOT” (Anna and Aksel in microphones)
- THE PLAY, p.18 (Nela + Aurora, on each side of the audience)

- IMAGES; Libya —image, Vietnam-image, Palestine-image
- TEXTS: IF I ESCAPE... (everybody reads their own text)
- SOUND: DON'T LISTEN TO A WORD YOU HEARD. (Everybody moves around, get rid of their papers, someone hands an envelope to Aurora, everybody stops)
- AURORA (in the microphone): IS IT OK THAT I FEEL ALL RIGHT?
- FROM THE PLAY: I LOOKED EVERYWHERE FOR SOMEWHERE ELSE.
I looked everywhere for a somewhere else, but I didn't find anything. Everywhere was still here and it was exhausting.
- LIST OF QUESTIONS (to the audience)
- JOHNY CASH: "SUE" (AKSEL + THOMAS)
- Image: FLYING MAN
- DEFINITION, flying on winds (JUSTINE)
- TEXTS: THE FUTURE IS A PLACE...Anna's text
- EXCERPT FROM AKSEL'S TEXT: NEEDING OUR CORPSES
- ROLAND BARTHES (THOMAS) (Gets the book, reads an excerpt)
- SOUND: "TULLINGEN" (Thomas introduces the song, turns it on and off)
- NELA PERFORMS AURORA'S TEXT ABOUT LOSING HER FATHER
- "MY BODY" (SIMON, THOMAS, HELENE)

- FROM THE PLAY: LETTERS p. 49 (Helene)
- TEXT FROM “WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE” (Simon, Justine)
- HI, MY NAME IS... (everybody on a row)

Obviously the above **document** is also a collection of things from the archive of this research project. Any collection like this could have ended up with a different order of the current things or even with a different collection. When working with the documents of the informant in *WOE* and *Childism*, the question of whether we have ownership of our own personal narratives has come to the surface. Do the stories about our life belong to us? And if not, to whom do they belong, if anybody at all? Maria Tamboukou writes about narratives in the archive as a process where there is really no specific narrator, nor a specific listener. The stories we tell, she writes, are ‘components of an **assemblage**’ (2015: 1) or things put together where narrator, listener, and the story itself are mutually constituted. There is no outside relation. In fact, Tamboukou’s point is that both you the reader and the story, this text, emerge and come into being ‘intra-actively’ through ‘intra-actions’. Karen Barad describes the latter concept as relations between components without a stable position rather than interactions, which occur between already established and separate entities. (Barad, 2007)

Thus, the text at hand is thought of as part of a process of narrating, forming new things from the archive of the research undertaken. This text is a document connecting to various experiences, incidents, things, occasions and events. However the text is also performing documentation in its becoming. When the informant tells her story she is performing **memory**. Simultaneously, she performs a document as she constructs a narrative in the moment drawing from her memory. The same happens in the process of writing this document: returning to the experiences of the research through a performed memory,

different narratives are constructed that take shape through the writing process. The reader will further add to the shaping of this document that becomes a document through its encounter with other things – a collection, someone remembering or someone reading. Together with the reader, this material will take new paths revealing other things, take new forms, and teach us more.

New materialism

This research project is influenced by and refers to thinkers associated with what is labelled ‘new materialism’. Rosi Braidotti and Manuel DeLanda first referred to the concept independently of each other in the late 1990s. Other thinkers considered part of this philosophical movement are Jane Bennett, Elizabeth Grosz and Karen Barad. New materialism is concerned with deconstructing dualisms in science, the humanities and all other fields, instead focusing on interdisciplinarity and transversality as a way to open up paradoxes in affirmative modes of creation. It is a non-dual orientation concerned with matter as vital, moving and holding agency, exploring how this affects thinking, subjectivity, and human action in various fields. A materialist approach to staging documents searches for an **ethics** that is grounded in the same non-dual approach, where the material at hand (texts, sounds, performers, audiences, props, etc.) is perceived to act in equal collaboration with the conceptual framework without any attempt at making sense in a conventional way connected to human thinking and behaviour. The ideal is rather to experience things in flux, dancing with each other in unexpected ways and patterns. ‘New materialism allows for the study of the two dimensions in their entanglement: the experience of a piece of art is made up of matter *and* meaning’ (Dolphijn & van der Tuin 2012: 91). A natural consequence of this orientation is a questioning of established power structures, traversing existing philosophical traditions seemingly in opposition, creating other strings of thought not bound by belongings and affiliations. This approach is what

characterizes a **nomadic dramaturg**. Braidotti calls this a method of *transpositions* and writes: '[It] is like a musical variation that leaps across scales and compositions to find a pitch or a sharable level of intensity. What matters to my thought is the synchronization of the different elements, their affective dimension, the affinity, not the political or theoretical correctness' (Braidotti 2006: 56). Braidotti speaks of this passionate and joyful relationship as activating *potentia* and the 'life force'. It is 'the mode of connection and communication between things, inevitably giving way to the literalness of things' (192).

Having an object-oriented philosophical approach, new materialists are less concerned with the ontology of things and objects, and more concerned with how the relations between materials affect one another and create new perceptions of the real. Dramaturgs are often thought of as holding an in-between position in an artistic collaboration. They are often thought of as the ones who look for connections between things in order to find logic and create a structure for a production. All contemporary object-oriented and materialist philosophies are concerned with the spaces between things, and new materialism considers how to treat these spaces not as difference (based on duality), but as potential spaces for transformation triggered by desire and co-affectivity. Change as a vital value is central to new materialism, as is re-addressing existing perceptions of the real from a non-dualist viewpoint. The 'new' is thus questioned as a concept of linearity, and one could instead, following Braidotti, look upon the work of these philosophers as a *mapping* of thoughts and phenomena in play. New materialism offers a certain freedom of cross-referencing in the attempt to establish different theory formations; this allows for the emergence of e.g. an encyclopaedia.

New materialism not only allows for *addressing* the conventional epistemic tendency to what can be summarized as classification or *territorialization* (when a new trend appears on the academic stage, it is usually interpreted as a "class" that

can be added to an existing classification of epistemologies), but also - and at the same time - for *de-territorializing* the academic territories, tribes, and temporalities traditionally considered central to scholarship.

(Dolphijn & van der Tuin 2012: 100)

O

OOO

Object-oriented ontology is a relatively new orientation in western philosophy. The main enquiry is evidently to look into the ontology of objects, as opposed to only focus on questions of human becomings. In its quest into the life of things, object-oriented ontology argues that there is no difference between objects and subjects; in fact, it claims that everything is an object, including human bodies, thoughts, language, and dreams. In the process of enquiring into how one can relate ethically to documentary material in staged events, it has been relevant to question notions of ownership, care, empathy, and relationships between artists, informants and **audiences**. Somewhere in the process, the shared impressions, which turned into texts for performance, when seen as things or objects became central as something to care for and relate to in its own right detached from the original source of human experience. This refocused the research towards the material itself and how to relate ethically to it as an equally important collaborator in the work.

Is there a distinction between object and **thing**? Both Graham Harman and Timothy Morton use the word object as a definition of everything from the universe to a hammer, a human **body**, a thought, a word etc. The following discussion of OOO will address their understanding of an object. Other material thinkers such as Martin Heidegger and Silvia Benso are more interested in things as distinct from objects: less defined, more porous and flexible, while Tristan Garcia searches for a way to describe what a thing is. The main

point with object-oriented ontology is that objects are not solid and fixed; They are affected by other things, including humans and all other animate and inanimate objects with which they stand in **relation**. The **reality** of any object, thing, or entity is never fully known neither by itself or anything else. The reason for this is that its reality shifts by what relates to it in what specific way, place, and **time**. Harman uses Heidegger's example of the bridge when he explains:

A bridge is not a mere conglomerate of bolts and trestles, but a total geographic force to reckon with: a unitary bridge-effect. But even this unified bridge-machine is far from an absolute, obvious unit. It too has a vastly different reality depending on whether I cross it on the way to a romantic liaison or as a prisoner underway to execution.

(Harman, 2010: 96)

This implies that the way we relate to a material affects its reality and how it further changes the reality it is a part of. Acknowledging and respecting the **unknown** aspect of objects and things seems to be an ethical way of relating both to sentient and non-sentient beings. It calls for curiosity, a careful approach, and **listening**, and avoids colonizing, the power of definition, ownership, or using the object to strengthen a self. This research set out to explore how this framework could be practiced in the work with staging documents, and what consequences it would have on such practice.

Object-oriented *philosophy* is concerned with the division between the object's existence in its concealed state of action, when it is working in relation to its purpose, and when it becomes visible and present to us as a result of it giving resistance: when it stops working or in any other way takes form through separating from its 'other existence'. This is what Heidegger calls tool-being and broken tool, where the broken tool breaks into visibility 'as' it is, explains Harman (2002: 50). The inexhaustible amount of realities an object can

be perceived to be part of is a result of causality, which is a central aspect to object-oriented ontology. When two separate objects come into contact with each other they leave aesthetic marks that are visible. This aesthetic dimension, such as speech for instance, is a result of the encounter between objects. However, it is not the actual reality of the object, which is always **withdrawn** from perception. ‘Because a thing withdraws, it disturbs us with an excess over what we can **know** or say about it, or what anything can know or say about it’ (Morton, 2013: 47). For Morton, the notion of withdrawal points to the essence of things, which to him means beyond any kind of access. It is not possible to capture the real of things; in fact, it is not possible to capture the real at all.

[A]ny knowledge about the table (mine, a machine’s, whatever) is not a table. It’s just not possible for my knowledge about tables to replace this table. So there will inevitable be moments where I am stumped as to whether I am seeing a table or not. The table withdraws.

(Morton, 2013: 59)

If what we see is the aesthetic marks of various encounters between objects, it implies that as artists we will not be able to control fully the outcome of artistic expression. This research takes up that challenge, and tests out a situation of letting go of control of the material in the encounter with a spectating audience. This is **dramaturgy** that takes into account that the knowledge and understanding we have of a story, object, or thing is never its reality. The flickering oscillation between knowing and not knowing provides the potential for an **ethics** of documentary dramaturgy. Morton writes about a *rift* between the object’s essence and its appearance. He explains that the essence of the table is its reality beyond reach, and what appears is our use of the table ‘including thinking about it, talking about it, resting my teacup on it’ (Morton, 2013: 60), which is not the real table. The point is that the object does not exist as something in service of our needs or demands, but that it has an existence independent of its use (and us).

Harman is looking at the ways in which the isolated objects relate to each other through what he calls 'ether'. His main point in what he calls guerrilla metaphysics (Harman, 2005) is that things have endless realities that can be seen from innumerable perspectives. However, despite their unknown aspects, objects and things are able to communicate through different mediums argues Harman. A medium, he says, is any 'space in which two objects interact, whether the human mind be one of these objects or not' (91). Humans are caught in a dual linguistic structure, which defines things and consequently reduce them. Humans can never fully exhaust a thing or an object, neither by perceiving and identifying it, nor by using, relating or touching it. The same goes for the relation between two things: 'reduction belongs to any relation between any two objects in the universe, no matter what they may be' (Harman, 2010: 124). In his essay *The Third Table*, written for *Documenta 13* (2012), Harman also writes about the table when he takes up art's capacity to present, or represent, the reality of objects and things. He writes about the depth of things that can only be accessed through a medium, which can be an image, poetry, another object, etc. His argument is that the reality of a table is neither reduced to its scientific, physical particles invisible to the eye, nor to the series of effects and uses the object has for people and other things. Rather, the real table, he argues, lies between these two positions as a third table. Its reality is deeper, he claims, 'than any theoretical or practical encounter with it' (9). Harman believes that an object or thing

emerges as something distinct from its own components and also *withdraws* behind its external effects. Our table is an intermediate being found neither in subatomic physics nor in human psychology, but in a permanent autonomous zone where objects are simply themselves.

(Harman, 2012: 10)

According to Harman the world is filled with ghostly objects that are only accessible ‘by allusion and seducing us by means of *allure*’ (2012: 12), which is, according to him, what the artwork is able to do. Does the seduction referred to here point toward the sensual qualities of art’s ability to allure withdrawn objects into presence? Here, it seems Harman is referring to such art objects as installations, sculptures or paintings. Can the documentary text material in a staged performance or **presentation** be seen as such a ‘third object’? Or is it the text that allures the object of the past (the abusive experience) understood as a ‘third object’? The documentary text in performance emerges as a distinct story, but simultaneously withdraws behind that same story. As material or substance, the text is able to relate to the past experience through an indirect approach, which is what Harman indicates when he uses the word seduction. The text can only make allusions to past realities and events. However, those allusions also allure the past experience to emerge in the present as an object or a thing. The past becomes another object in the present, and thus the past, **memory** and the text create each other as separate but entangled objects. The text offers a demanding call to the dramaturg, performer and audience to simply let it be itself and relate to it as partly known and partly unknown.

Object-oriented ontology (OOO) argues that objects are separate independent entities; however, they always stand in relation to other objects, and cannot come into being or into a field of perception without these connections. Thus, the documentary text material needs an encounter with a **body** and a **voice**, a space, **time**, feelings, memory and thoughts. The text will always be influenced by its encounter with us and everything else in the moment of **speaking** it. Thus we cannot control it in relation to **interpretations**, concepts of what it means or what it depicts, or feelings we may have or that may arise when speaking or hearing it. However, we can work on finding ways to liberate the text from our artistic interpretations in order to open up a greater space for audience to go into relation with the

text, creating other forms of causal realities. Morton gives us an example from the art world. When having an experience of beauty, we cannot locate what it is in the piece of art that is beautiful: it is the combination of things, yet it is not the piece as a whole. Morton argues that the experience of beauty is object-oriented in the sense that it emanates from the relation between the works' different parts. Also, he continues, the experience of beauty goes beyond ego. 'The freedom discovered in beauty is profoundly impersonal and thus it's "object-like"' (Morton, 2013: 90).

The OOO answer is that there is a profound ontological ambiguity in objects themselves. This ambiguity is reflected in relations between and within objects. We need to explore the nature of this ambiguity.

(Morton, 2013: 89)

P

Presentation

Is there a difference between a performance and a presentation? And what is the difference between a presentation and a representation? In the context of theatre and the staged arts, a performance bears the connotation of being a product, a result of a process (which may, however, still be going on and things may still change throughout a repertoire process). The expectation of a performance is to present a complete work of art that has been worked through and is well rehearsed. Being an act of representation, which means it is not taking place in an everyday **reality** but as an artistic image of reality, signifies performance. This is of course a contradiction, since all live performance, and everything else for that matter, is utterly real. On the other hand, object-oriented ontology (**OOO**) claims that what we perceive as real is merely an aesthetic affect or an illusion of the real.

In the two projects *Encountering Loss* and *Childism* we chose to invite the **audience** to *presentations* rather than performances. The reason for this was that we want to signal to

the audience a focus on actively relating to a given material that is presented to them, rather than performed, understood as a display of artistic mastery. The process of relating is an ongoing, dynamic, and ever-evolving process that is never stable or smooth. Presenting the material rather than performing it emphasises how the moment of encounter with an audience is part of the process equal to any other moment during the process. In *Encountering Loss* we did not rehearse at all in the sense of repeating and refining material. The last day of each workshop we went through what we had been doing during the five or ten days of working together. We then made a **list** of it, which we edited in a couple of hours, choosing the experiences we found most interesting and finding an order to present them. We also decided on some spatial arrangements on the spot, such as shaking hands with the audience at the beginning of the presentation, writing names of people we admire on a large piece of paper on the back wall, playing a tune on a flute, or everybody sitting on the floor looking at the audience and commenting on what they see: I see a girl who just bought a new sweater, I see a man who lost his keys yesterday, I see a woman who fought with her husband this morning, etc. Obviously, all observations were fictional. The series of ‘scenes’ that the collective group had decided upon was presented to the audience the following day.

In *Childism*, the process turned out slightly different. The two professional performers argued for more repetition and refining of the material they were to present. As a professionally trained **dancer** and **actor** respectively, Henriette and Petra possess tools and methods to encounter performative material through dwelling with it and deepening their **relation** to it. This is an asset that you don’t find with amateurs. We met four times during the span of a year, five days each **time**. The audience witnessed where we were in our process at the time of the presentation (November 14th 2015), a process that potentially could move on and end up in a different presentation, at a different time. If we were to

present it repeatedly, it would never be precisely the same material presented, since the goal would be to researching and relating to the material and the situation in different ways. The audience **conversations**, which are an integral part of the presentation, would also be different each time. The idea behind this form is to be in a continuous dialogue with the material, **listening** and actively making decisions each based upon that process, constantly exploring new aspects and realities in the material. The audience is invited into this dialogue at a certain point, and ideally we would like them to come back for each presentation in order to take part in the process and relate actively to the material in their own ways. The goal with framing these events as presentations rather than performances has been to shift the expectations of the audience, and situate them as equal partners in a process of relating to the given material. Any presentation is shared and also is a re-presentation, if we take Richard Schechner's notion of 'restored behaviour' or 'twice-behaved behaviour' into account (2002: 28). However, the emphasis on presentation in this context, rather than re-presentation, points to the claim that the past only exists in the present, as a presentation of a **thing** from the archived history. The ways this is accurate for daily behaviour as well needs to be discussed outside the scope of this encyclopaedia.

Proximity

Does **relation** imply that we are close? Heidegger points out that *nearness* depends on something being far. Proximity does not only mean staying next to or close enough so that you touch the other object physically. Proximity means that the distance between the objects in relation varies. Can we be far away and still in proximity? The **collaborators** in *Encountering Loss* worked closely, sharing their thoughts, opinions and feelings even though they did not previously **know** each other or meet privately. Spending **time** and sharing space put them in a rather intimate relation to each other. However, we also stayed in proximity when not physically together through a feeling of belonging to a group and a

specific project over the span of a year. We dealt similarly with the play *Tideline* by Mouawad, and the topic of loss — our own and others next to us and far away.

The following images are from the process of *Encountering Loss*. The three first images are from the rehearsal space at the National Theatre in Oslo, which demonstrate different kinds of physical proximity when sharing a space, and also how the space itself and the objects in it take part in the relational movements: the walls, the paper being written on or read from, the carpeted floor, the furniture. The topic and the play (*Tideline*), dealt with physically, mentally and orally in shared time and space, moves the participants into relations. The last image is from a performative intervention that Helene Skogland did, which involved sitting and crying in public space to see how long it would take for any of the people passing by to relate to her. Are the people passing not taking notice of her still in relation with the situation? And what is the relation with the photographic device and the eye behind it?







Q

Questions

(in Norwegian and English, from the process of *Encountering Loss*)

Hvem er du?

Who are you?

Hva tror du om mennesker?

What do you think of humans?

Hva tror du om dyr?

What do you think of animals?

Hva er forskjellen på mennesker og dyr?

What is the difference between humans and animals?

Hva tror du om kjærlighet?

What do you think about love?

Hva er du sikker på?
What are you sure of?

Hvorfor er du sikker?
Why are you sure?

Hva er mest viktig i ditt liv?
What is most important in your life?

Hva er livet ditt uten dette?
What is your life without this?

Hva savner du i ditt liv?
What do you miss in your life?

Hva får deg til å føle deg vel?
What makes you feel well?

Hva ønsker du å bli?
What do you wish to become?

Er du født den du er i dag?
Are you born as who you are today?

Hvorfor er du den du er i dag?
Why are you the one you are today?

Hvor ligger universet?
Where lies the universe?

Hva er tap?
What is loss?

Hvorfor sorger vi ?
Why do we grieve?

Hva angrer du på?
What do you regret?

Hva har du mistet?
What have you lost?

Hvordan har du det idag?
How are you today?

Har du troen på noe?
Do you have faith in anything?

Hvorfor mister vi troen?
Why do we loose faith?

Hva er sannheten?
What is truth?

Finnes det en sannhet?
Is there any truth?

Hva slags rolle spiller du i samfunnet?
What role do you play in society?

Er kjærlighet størst av alt?
Is love biggest of all?

Kan man definere ordet 'tap'?
Is it possible to define the word 'loss'?

Hva skjer med de døde?
What happens to the dead?

Hvorfor angrer vi på ting vi ikke kan gjøre noe med?

Why do we regret things we cannot change?

Kan en person forandre hele ditt liv?

Can a person change your entire life?

Hvorfor hater vi ?

Why do we hate?

Er du viktig?

Are you important?

Hva skaper dårlig selvtillit?

What creates low self esteem?

Hva er frihet?

What is freedom?

Hvem tror du du er?

Who do you think you are?

Hvorfor tror du det?

Why do you think so?

Kan noen være smarte uten at andre er dumme?

Can anyone be smart if there is no one who is stupid?

Kan noen være høye uten at andre er lave?

Can anyone be tall if there is no one who is short?

Kan noen være gode uten at andre er onde?

Can anyone be good if no one is evil?

Hvordan tenker vi før vi lærer språk?

How do we think before we learn a language?

Hvordan tenker en hund?

How does a dog think?

Hva skjer når vi drømmer?

What happens when we dream?

Drømmer vi nå?

Are we dreaming now?

Hvorfor ikke?

Why not?

Eksisterer Ringenes Herre?

Does the Lord of the Rings exist?

Hvor kom det fra?

Where did that come from?

Er det noe rundt oss i dag som ikke stammer fra menneskelig fantasi?

Is there anything around us today that does not come from human imagination?

Hva gjør det med oss å leve i en fantasiverden?

How does it affect us to live in a world of imagination?

Hva gjør det med oss å aldri se død?

How does it affect us to never witness death?

Hva er død?

What is death?

Er du den samme nå som for 10 år siden?

Are you the same now as you were ten years ago?

Hvem er i så fall du?

Who are you in that case?

R

Relation

We are born in relation.

We are born into relation.

Ethics is about relations.

It is impossible to be outside any relation. That is also a relation.

Relation is not ordered, it is chaotic.

[T]o be located “in” space or “in” time is already to have been caught in a web of relations [...] [Things] are caught in the fields of, and otherwise “spaced” and “timed” by other entities.

(Morton, 2013: 21).

Questions of presence are central to most artists working with live performance. In the context of the present work, it may be interesting and relevant to exchange the word *presence* with *relation*, as presence requires relation. The word relation is more active in the sense that you can live a relation, and relation is connective, while presence is centred around a subjective experience of ‘being present’, suggesting it is a state in which I can put myself. When Silvia Benso speaks of the ‘**faciality**’ of things (2000), she believes it is through the revealed side of things that they express the presencing of a beyond ‘from which and to which the demand things place upon mortals originates. The form of the demand is the very presence of things’ (155). The presence of the faciality of the **thing**, which is what we can perceive of it, requires stepping into an active and conscious relation with it. The ethical demand things present mortals with is a ‘demand to *come into contact* not in the modes of manipulation, but rather in the modes of a *nearing*’ (155).

The texts in this collection stand in relation to each other, to the writer and to the reader.

The texts in this **encyclopaedia** relate to other practices in rehearsal spaces and other places. They relate to people, things, memories, buildings, experiences, food having been

eaten, **conversations** having been spoken, dreams having been dreamt in the past and in the future. Relation is never static, relation moves us!

Rhythm

In *Rhythmanalysis* (2004) Henri Lefebvre presents a rhythmic approach to life; everything has a rhythm because everything is a composition of **words**, movement, intensity, sound, form, substances, images, etc. All subjects, all characters, all bodies, and all things are one of many rhythms accumulating into a bigger picture. Seeing the world as rhythm emphasizes the interconnectivity between things, be it sentient beings or non-sentient objects. Polyphony is perhaps the most realistic way of portraying **reality**, if that is a goal, and it all starts in our own bodies. The **body** with its **heartbeats** is like a metronome and all other rhythms are measured in relation to it. Lefebvre is concerned with how everything holds a rhythm. Rhythm ‘enters into the lived’ (77) as he puts it. He emphasises that to hear or experience the rhythm of something does not mean that you know what the **thing** is. If rhythm is in everything is it also a thing in itself? Or is rhythm the ether (to use Harman’s concept) or the medium through which other things and objects connect? Rhythm is a thing that is withdrawn when it moves in ways that are habitual to us. However, as Lefebvre points out ‘[w]e are only conscious of most of our rhythms when we begin to suffer from some irregularity’ (2004: 77).

Rhythm and body are the basis for performing. For an **actor** or a **dancer** it means to find play in and with movement, **voice**, pulse, and breath. It is with these instruments that a performer can choose to *play* the text (words or movements) in the sense of playing music, by letting the text resonate with, and be in step with, the body’s own rhythms, which always relate to and engage with other rhythms outside the performer’s own body. Spoken text has become an intrinsic part of contemporary dance performances, and actors can

learn much from the ways dancers approach text work. Dancers work with text on stage similarly to how they work with movement in much contemporary work. It is less about mental constructions, conceptualisations and narrative, but rather more about performing action. Actors can learn from this focus by pointing beyond the performing subject, where it is the performer's task to portray or present other voices, rather than specific characters. Many dancers communicate text very well within this paradigm because they are used to working with rhythms, tempo, intensity, atmospheres, timbre, etc., which they naturally anchor in their own bodies. Movement helps them not only to remember the text but also to place it, so to speak, on the boundary between the inside and the outside, i.e. on the skin. Thus, the task does not constitute a meeting between text and a specific subject but rather between text, bodies, space, **time**, rhythm etc. The text is liberated and can flow into the room, allowing the audience access to a larger space for encounters without having to relate to the actual subject on the stage or to the fixed interpretations of the performer, director or dramaturg. This requires an open, unprejudiced, and trustful attitude on the performer's part, where his or her presence within the performance of, and in conjunction with, the text becomes the continuous practice of exploring the text in the moment, in **relation**. It is not about deciding on an **interpretation** to be communicated, but rather it is about exploring how text works through one's self today, how it vibrates in a person.

A rhythmic or musical approach provides the opportunity to hear a text in the broadest sense: the concrete meaning of the words, the physical expression, the vibration or movement that is triggered by the relationship between text, body, voice, and space. These different layers relate to each other in a polyphonic structure, which extends the possibility for a polyphonic formation of meaning. Working with text through a rhythmical approach means releasing control of layers of preconceived interpretation and emotional states to

instead let one self go and follow the rhythm through **listening**. Working in ensembles, actors can learn a lot from observing how musicians work together in jazz improvisation.

[T]o grasp a rhythm it is necessary to have been *grasped* by it; one must *let oneself go*, give oneself over, abandon oneself to its duration [...] In order to *grasp* this fleeting object, which is not exactly an object, it is therefore necessary to situate oneself simultaneously inside and outside.

(Lefebvre, 2004: 27)

Reality

The tension between reality and fiction has always shaped the theatrical arts. The real is also a central point of discussion in **documentary theatre** practice. The hope of most artists working within this genre is to re-present the real. However, through looking at object-oriented ontology (**OOO**) and Morton's thoughts around **illusion** and what he calls 'realist magic' (Morton, 2013), this research project aspires to question the perceived dichotomy between real and fiction within documentary theatre practice, and proposes instead to speak in terms of materialist thought and conceptualisation. When considering the things with which we surround ourselves in rehearsal and also the performing space, we could claim that there is nothing fictional about them. They are as real as anything else. On the other hand what object-oriented ontology argues is that both what is perceived as real *and* as fictional are constructed, and thus neither of them are real *or* fictional. Then what are they? Well, they are all objects and things.

When relating to the documentary and fictional material in the process of *Encountering Loss*, many things were influenced by our relationship to the material we were working with. The rehearsal space of the National Theatre in Oslo, which we borrowed, had thick, dark blue carpet covering from wall to wall. It had relatively low ceilings, and the small windows faced right into some kind of ventilation system on the roof of the building. In

addition, another group of artists who were working on a play, had spread out notes and sheets of papers on some tables and boards. We often ended up sitting and stretching out on the floor, which created a kind of cosy and comfortable setting. However, the space itself was rather dark and intimate. These surroundings, and the slight mess created by the participant's clothes, food bags, cups, glasses, bags, notebooks – mostly lying around on the floor – added to the relaxed atmosphere. The premises created a feeling of being stranded in some strange hotel room together, which created a specific concentration amongst us similar to the intense meetings one can sometimes experience when encountering strangers on a travel. This rather unusual and slightly awkward rehearsal space also felt slightly claustrophobic, which may have added a certain constraint or feeling of compression in the process, resulting in a seriousness and depth in our discussions. It almost felt like we were locked in for a period of two weeks, with only each other, our topic and various texts. Very little private information was exchanged.

In contrast the first workshop period took place in the restaurant premises of the National Theatre in Oslo, which is a space with golden ornaments, high ceilings, wooden floor, large windows, small sofas, tables and chairs in red velvet and a glass bar. This environment seemed to create a colder, stricter, less personal, and more intellectual approach to the material at hand. It did not change much that the collaborators brought in food and private things. In this huge and spacious place they rather seemed to diminish and almost disappear. Being in the theatre restaurant represented more of a fight to find their personal voices, as the space was so charged with formal theatre history and power. Not the least because this 100-year-old preserved space limited our physical possibilities when staging material, it influenced what was presented to the **audience**. Those conditions seemed to test the temperament of many of the **collaborators**, having to fight more to be heard and seen for who and what they are. Hodder writes of a 'cross-cutting distinction'

between ‘going towards and going away from things’. Our dependence on things often seems to involve trying to escape from them as much as it involves identifying with them, he claims (2012: 21). The ways in which we move in and around objects also form our bodies and actions.

This research project deals with the kind of theatre where documentary and fictional material is blurred, juxtaposed, and combined in a collage-like aesthetic: the **actor** gives **voice** to a living person’s (or lived person) **words**, and the **dancer** offers her **body** and physical expression. It may be understood as a kind of surrogate exercise, opening up a space for **listening** to absent voices and lost experiences. However, it may also diminish the presumed lost landscape of the story told in the **document**, due to the limitations of the performer’s real body. One important question is whether there is anything lost at all. Are the words and movements simply vibrant things appearing and disappearing, being experienced in relation to other objects (including bodies) in the moments of **presentation**? As a performing strategy, the main point is to keep a vibrant relationship between the chosen material and the performer’s body and voice. This means that one does not fix any **interpretation** or intention about what to communicate, but to listen to what is offered in each moment of the presentation. The material needs to be listened to again and again in an active relationship played out in the moment of performance in front of an audience. In the book *Get Real*, Alan Filewod writes:

The actor embodies the actual, but the actual is perceived only through the effort of the actor’s body. The actuality so perceived in the surrogate moment also erases that which the actor does not embody, so that ‘reality’ collapses into the presence of the actor who stands before us as subject and object, document and documenter, whose authority derives simultaneously from the representation and the erasure of actuality [...] the more we experience the performance as the phenomenal reality,

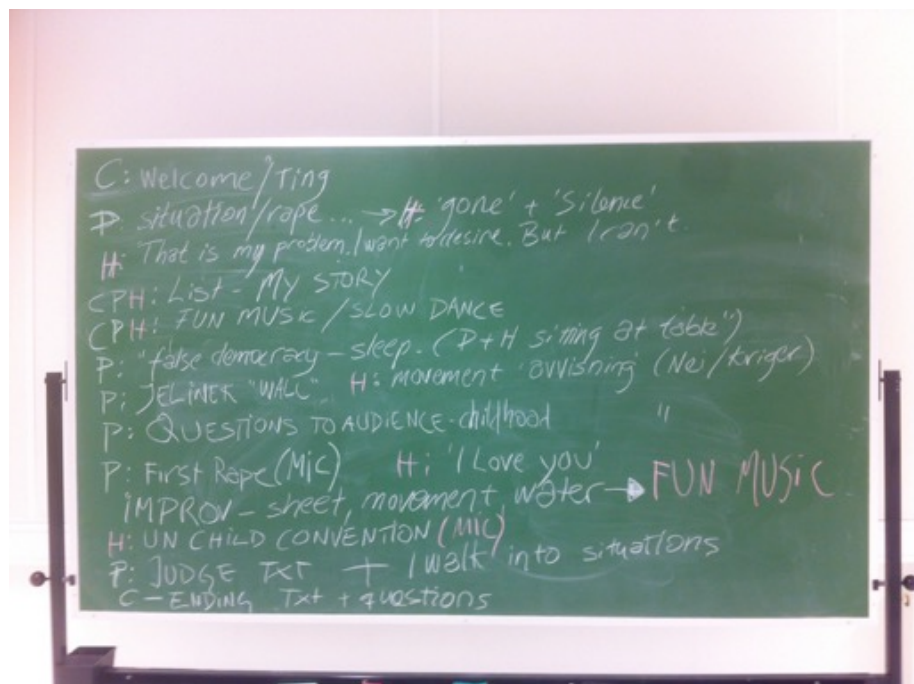
the wider the gap between the subject and the object: performance threatens to become more 'real' than the actuality it enacts.

(Filewod, 2011: 62)

In the same publication, Carol Martin concludes: '[D]ocumentary theatre troubles our already troubled categories of truth, reality, fiction and acting. As a theoretical endeavour, documentary theatre can critique the ways in which we transmit information in theatrical settings' (2011: 89).

S

Score





Speaking

When speaking on stage in the context of a materialist practice of staging documents, it is necessary to relate to the **words** as things. What does this mean? It means a realisation that the word is 'presenced' by the sounds the actor's **body** makes, that it is created in that moment as something original to explore in its **relation** to the specific **time** and place it is uttered. This requires that the performer accept that there is always something **withdrawn** in the **thing**, which she cannot grasp, **know** or understand. She has to listen to the sounds to hear what word it creates, although she thinks she knows it already. Speaking in front of an **audience** means to project sounds into a space that we share. It is an invitation to the audience to listen together with the performer, to explore, relate and stay in dialogue with what is heard and perceived. Speaking in documentary performance means to keep questioning the words, to keep them vibrating, and to always attempt to see and hear them differently. It means to share sounds, and in the sharing to reveal other sides, to become part of a **rhythm** where past experiences are recalled differently and repeated in the present, affecting the now and the future.

Silence

Moments of silence matter because they allow for communal **listening**. But how do they occur? Chris Goode writes in relation to Pinter's differentiation between pauses and silences: 'a 'pause', it strikes me, may be something enacted by an actor; a 'silence' however, is not an action, but a quality or state in the space as a whole' (2016: 74). We worked with producing pauses in all the performance projects that form part of this research project. Pauses between the sounds leave space for the sounds to affect both the **body** that spoke and the bodies that listened. Silence may occur in the pauses, if there is common listening in the entire space shared by performers and **audience**. In *Childism* there was a situation where we played a song from the film *Flashdance* (1983) loudly from speakers. This occurred after the most explicit scene about sexual **abuse**. While we played the entire song (4.04 minutes) we were sewing at the table placed on stage. Even during the loud sound from the speakers, a particular feeling of silence arose, which was strengthened in the moments after the song finished and the activity of sewing continued. Silence holds a promise of something coming, it holds movement at bay offering **time** to listen both inside and outside, reflecting on what has passed and questioning what is to come. Goode writes about it as a 'leaning into the room, waiting to hear [...] the lived silence of a place inhabited by a group of people engaged in an active, searching collaboration: a real place' (Goode 2016: 75). These are the spaces where **relations** start to vibrate. Sounds and silences are a continuous of a common movement.

Survivor

The following is a section of the script from the presentation *Childism* (2015).

Camilla:

A maltreated child looks into something in her grown up perpetrator, which is connected to the total vulnerability, a fundamental fragility and precariousness. It is the total loneliness that lies implicit in a human life.

Petra (ear phones):

What really hurts me today is when people doubt my ability to love my own children. To be abused is not the same as not learning about love. An abuser is not a monster impossible to overcome. He is a human being, unfortunately filled up with emotions and memories he cannot handle. So he – or she – tries to use someone else to get rid of it, or even to make him feel better for a moment. To abuse is a moment of emotional relief from abuse. You develop a sensibility for changes of moods, and to read and predict what consequences they will have. I understood the loneliness and the pain my perpetrators were living in. I felt such incredible deep pity for the ones who violated me. Despite it all, I am the one who has been able to learn and grow, they are still victims!

Petra (ear phones):

I describe myself now, when I feel like being good to myself, as very very brave. Not necessarily very strong, or very smart. All these things that sometimes people tell me I am I think it's nice. But the thing I really own is I'm brave. I can try to be all these other people that I'd like to be and I've tried to be, but the one that I am is the most volatile and the most complicated, the most messy.

Henriette:

You know what feeling I'd like to get rid of? That I am still not worth enough just as I am. That I somehow still need to prove that I'm not shit.

T

Tenderness

I entered the theatre space reluctantly, feeling nervous of what I would have to face and wondering why you would choose to use such difficult material. You managed however to transmit a sense of trust, confidence and tenderness towards the material and us in the audience. I was worried it would become an exploitation of the story and the person behind it. But it didn't. You made it clear that this is the

story of a survivor, someone who is able to deal with her history. You approached the topic from many angles and the conversation was interesting.

(Øverland, 2016, my translation)

The above quote is from a conversation with one audience member who was present at the presentation of *Childism* in Fredrikstad. This research project emerged from an interest in exploring **relations** and **ethics**, and how documentary performance can become an ethical practice where ‘we come face to face with the other, in a recognition of our mutual vulnerability which encourages relationships based on openness, dialogue and a respect for difference’ (Ridout 2009: 54). Such encounters question our conception of being, which is grounded in a foundational plurality where we are born into a condition of the self as already multiple. Questions quickly arose as to why such notions of being and relation would only concern human beings, somehow excluding other entities, and what a relation of equality, compassion and liberation would mean in the context of performance.

Silvia Benso differentiates between **thing** and object. To her things are what is characterised by the **unknown** aspect or the **withdrawn**, while objects have been captured and framed by human conceptualisation and linguistic structures. According to Benso things are ‘free’, while objects are ‘captured’. Benso picks up on Heidegger’s claim that the thingness of things has been forgotten, overlooked by science, and that the nature of things is never seen nor heard. She takes the ethical call of the other to include the otherness of others, namely things, which she claims represents the ultimate alterity: Her approach is from a point of view where humans are subjects, different from things and objects, and is concerned with the relationship between subject and object. This perspective cannot be overlooked when dealing with a materialist practice of staging documents. Though this project aspires to see text, props, space, and **body** equally as things, it is difficult to integrate this position fully. We are quite attached to a subjective

relationship to the body, from which we experience our encounters with things. Through her thinking, Benso challenges **anthropocentrism**, although she has not left the notion of subjectivity as radically as the philosophers identified with object-oriented ontology (OOO). She is more in accord with some of the feminist writers within what has been labelled ‘**new materialism**’ (Braidotti, Bennett, Grosz, Barad). Her thinking offers an interesting step in the direction of object-oriented ontology that can be realised in the practice of staging **documents** in particular connected to her notion of tenderness, which is one of her key concepts.

Tenderness would be a response to the alterity of things. Things possess a **reality**, Benso writes, which can be experienced but not possessed through a ‘touching mode of tenderness’. She claims that it is through tender touch, patience, and humility with things that we can access the metaphysical. Benso describes attention as an exercise in patience, which is fundamentally about humility. Attention waits for the other to make a move. In our context, it is a movement of humility where a will to power is deferred. Patience means to stay with nervousness, anxiety, excitement and the desire to create without pushing to solve or release those states and emotions, but simply letting them work through the **body** in relation to other things. Attention takes place in a mode of waiting where you don’t know what you are waiting for. It requires abandonment of the ‘I’ and of subjectivity as we know it in order to transcend the binary between self and other.

A thing is richer than the sound, the smell, the taste of it the I may – and does indeed – enjoy. It contains memories of an unreachable past, of the ancestral dance of the earth and the elements, of the eternal play of light and darkness, of being, but always as a beyond-being.

(Benso ,2000: 137)

For Benso, being in relation with things is to be a part of a reciprocal exchange and circulation: ‘To hear the language of things means to enter the spaciousness of things, to let them be as things, and thus to become thingly’ (2000: 154). However, she emphasizes the distance that must be maintained to avoid turning things into objects (of ownership), thereby keeping an ethical relationship by attending to the possibility of difference. To enter the spaciousness of things means to care for that space, in which the encounter and the relation can move freely. This supports the practice of working with distance when presenting a documentary text in a staged event or performance, and triggered the idea of thinking of the documentary recounts and texts as things. How can a text be spoken with tenderness?

The notion of tenderness might be mistaken for focusing solely on a peaceful encounter with things, which naturally is problematic, especially in regard to art practice. A relation is never stable; it is constantly in flux, moving through different emotional states: feelings that may result in a soft touch, a firm grip, or at other times violent or distant expressions. It can be said that any story being verbalized is already mediatized and thus potentially violating, objectifying and colonizing the actual event or experience, through its action of exclusion and framing the event in a specific **narrative**. Tenderness, in the way Benso writes about it, deals with violence through endurance. It cannot overcome violence and ego-logics, but tenderness can halt or postpone violence. If it patiently keeps doing this, destruction may eventually fade away (176). Violence can redeem itself by becoming responsive to the ethical demand of things, which includes its silent presence. A performer touches a spoken text sensually, through relating to it in the moments of speaking the words—through breath, tasting the words, through rhythm and movement. If speaking words of violence with tenderness repeatedly, eventually the event of violence that the

words reflect may start to fade away. This is what speaks for articulating explicit abuse in the presentation of *Childism*.

We have been exploring practical ways of speaking directly about violence on stage. Ways of distancing in order to open up a space where tender relationships can thrive. Using headphones is one way, as it repeats someone else's **words**, evoking other bodies. To read from a script or a paper held in the hands, or to speak rhythmically, and avoiding any naturalistic manner of articulation, are other ways to suggest that the spoken word does not attach to the **speaking** body. It does not have to be soft or slow; it can be fast, staccato, or spitting it out, so to speak. The point is to focus on the rhythmic aspect of the text rather than what emotions or meaning the **rhythm** produces. The goal is to demonstrate to the **audience** that the performer does not have any private emotional attachment to the material, which sets both the performer and the audience free to relate to the text in their own way. A level of personal responsibility and care for a wounded subject is removed. What remains, however, is the care for the experience that the text describes, which to a greater extent becomes a shared human experience. In this context, tenderness is connected to the concepts otherwise discussed here—of **time**, patience, humility, equality, **listening**, engagement and **compassion**. Tenderness is a useful concept, not because of its connection to care or healing, but because it is about mutual respect, a careful act of approaching that can hold all emotions—even of hatred and deep anger, albeit without acting on those emotions, simply letting them come and pass on. That is when it becomes interesting to see a performer who experiences a text. Tenderness is often connected to a nursing situation of healing a wound. In this context, we question if we are dealing with a wound at all. The informant we work with has done her healing work previous to our acquaintanceship, and is taking full responsibility for her part in the project. This is a very important aspect when working with informants in **documentary theatre** processes. Perhaps the wound has

transformed from being perceived as an object of the informant, ‘captured’ and owned by her, to having become a sealed wound, a thing that is ‘free’ with its own agency, and which cannot be possessed by anyone?

Time has Fallen Asleep in the Afternoon Sunshine

The performance *Time has Fallen Asleep in the Afternoon Sunshine* (2010) by Mette Edvardsen, demonstrates a practice of relating to the ethical call of things in this case a series of books. Now, it is not the concrete books themselves—ink on paper—which are the centre of attention, but the way **words** and sentences formulated by an author are reappearing and reoccurring as things when spoken by a performer. The piece has been performed by several people: trained performers, authors, curators, and friends, in several cities world wide, in libraries and in bookshops. The **audience** buys a ticket and arrives at a given **time**, chooses a ‘book’ in the form of a performer who is in the process of relating to the book through learning it by heart. The audience member sits down with the ‘book-performer’ at a chosen place in the library, and the book is read, given, materialized, and presenced in its thingness, to use Heidegger’s terminology. The audience member is the listener, receiver, and co-creator also presenced as **thing** in the process of the event. The dramaturg encountered the performer Martin Slaato and the first chapter from the book *Satanic Verses* originally written by Salman Rushdie.

Slaato led her to a round table in the children’s department of the library where he asked her to sit down. She took off her jacket, hung it on the chair, and was slightly nervous to what was expected of her. How was she going to ‘read’ the book? No instructions were given. With a slightly nervous smile, Slaato, the ‘book-performer’ started to speak in a soft, low tone of **voice**. Slowly he was searching for the words, stopping, smiling, and looking up to the ceiling. She was looking at him, not knowing if she should respond to his

words. Should she ask questions in order for him to continue? She felt like floating in **unknown** territory, trying to listen as a way to understand what was going on. Slowly, gently, carefully, and with **tenderness**, the first chapter of *Satanic Verses* unfolded into the space. Her ears and her **body** captured the words, the intensities, and the vibrations of the ‘book-performer’s’ body affected by the words and energies merging with her own. Slaato did not have a book in front of him—he was the book. He was relying on and exercising his **memory**. He was relating to the book, which was absent as object but still present as a thing, or rather being brought into presence by memory. They were both in the process of becoming book. They were creating images, unspoken but shared by looks and smiles inspired by Rushdie’s words materialising through the sharing of time and space. No words were invented or added. Slaato offered her the entire first chapter of *Satanic Verses*.

For Edvardsen, this project offers a possibility to explore performance as an ongoing practice, where the relationship between the performer and her material is one of tenderness, patience, and ‘presencing’. According to Edvardsen (2012), memory works spatially in layers, where you add one layer at the time. Eventually it becomes about how near or far the text is from you; how far I have to go to find it. With reference to Walter Benjamin, Edvardsen says it is like ‘flying over the landscape’ or ‘walking the road’. There is no difference between rehearsals and performing for an audience. Performing is the same practice as rehearsing. It is a continuous process. Through this process of making words repeatedly reappear, a relationship grows between the book as a thing in becoming-subject and the performer as a subject in becoming-thing. The invitation that things give through their silent presence and witnessing of all human activity, construction, and invention is to restrain from the I’s voracity, autonomy, unlimited power and mastery. The **ethics** of things, for which Benso argues (2000), is a means to transcend ‘ego’ and give up the authority of the normative position to its fullest extent. This is also why Edvardsen is

concerned that the choice of which book to ‘be’ is individual, but not very important if it is this or that book. She is not acting as director deciding the text for the performers; it is up to them to choose. She prefers a book, which does not mean too much to her personally because she does not want to add her own meaning, **interpretation**, and mythologization onto the book. She does not want her reading and her encounter with the participant listener to represent her. This would come in the way for the centre of the practice as well as the project as such. It is not about representation, says Edvardsen:

We don’t need to project anything because we are seated so close to the listener.

This is not about style or form but about the purpose of the project. We cannot be neutral but we can try to be as close to the book and the language as we can, and let the book stay in the foreground.

(Edvardsen, 2012, my translation)

Slaato, the performer, explained how he tries to be with the text – again – so it does not become mere repetition where he is delivering a finished product, something he has to get through. That would exhaust him. Instead the experience of **listening** to Slaato is very alive, very vibrant, and engaging. It is important to him to not own the text. It is important to him to keep in mind that in the situation there are several present: the audience, him as performer, and the book, which is, in becoming-person, a creature or an organism as he formulates it. The book in becoming is something we wrap, dress up, so it achieves a new form, and we have to examine it again in each moment. Where is it now with this constellation of performer, audience, time of day, weather and so on? To Slaato this is a spatial relationship. Each time, he explores where the text is situated, how far or close it is, if it is below or above, behind or next to him. This is a constant process of relating to the text as a thing, which he uses after each half-page if he needs to. ‘Where are we now? You are here, I am there, but then something happened half way down the next page, which made you lower...’ (Slaato, 2012, my translation). This process creates a dynamic and

never fixed relationship always in motion. It is an attempt to relate ethically to the text as material, which is not owned neither by performer, audience, or author (nor the library for that matter).

Ultimately, says Benso, the demand things place on human beings is an appeal to remain faithful to their own mortality, a reminder of the finitude of subjectivity. Through the performers' relation with 'the depth of things', as Benso describes it, the performance *Time has Fallen Asleep in the Afternoon Sunshine* may actually be offering a possibility to find release from the experience of 'subject' or 'I', demanding of us to relate ethically to the book as thing and to relate to it not as subjects or 'humans' but as mortals. (Most likely the book has a longer life span than we do.) One could say that the way the performers enter the spaciousness of the book through their practice is respecting the 'thingness' of the book. It means respecting the alterity of the book and not taking possession of it, not manipulating it or violating its nearing character, which for Benso means to enter the spaciousness of the thing with attention and patience, not by penetrating that space but by listening for an invitation.

The appeal things send out is an invitation to put down the dominating modes of thought, to release oneself to things, and only thus to let them be as things, rather than as objects of technical and intellectual manipulation.

(Benso, 2000: 155)

The experience when being invited to share the space of *Satanic Verses* with Martin Slaato is that he is not the one giving meaning to the words; neither is Salman Rushdie. We are all guided by the thing—the book itself—and meaning is created in those spaces between the words by none of us in particular but by us moving together from one word to the next.

The feeling was that of being a child taken by the hand of a friend to share a secret mystery, a gift that he has discovered. It was a travel we did together where there was no

authorship. ‘Humility is an act of love of the one who lets herself or himself be taken by hand and led by things’ (Benso, 2000: 165).

Thing

What a thing is and the relation between things is currently discussed in object-oriented philosophy. The various ways of thinking around our relationship to things and objects have provoked the practice of this research in different ways. It has provided the practice and the reflection around it with workable concepts and vocabulary. What is proposed here is a sampling of ideas from some of the object-oriented philosophers, without claiming any one singular direction of how to think and work around a materialist strategy of staging documents.

Martin Heidegger differentiates between thing and object, explaining that an object is something we can visualize, mere form represented, while ‘the thingly character of the thing does not consist in its being a presented object, nor can it be defined in any way in terms of the objectness, the over-againstness, of the object’ (2001: 165). Thus a thing is a quality that can be attached to an object, or from which an object can appear or come into form. The thingness of a thing is connected to its function, what it does, in the way Heidegger speaks of the jug as a vessel, which can be filled and emptied. Heidegger emphasises how a jug’s holding is a taking, a keeping, and a pouring, and thus a giving. What the giving of the pouring does is to *gather* the aspects of what he names ‘the fourfold’, and this is what ‘presences’ the jug he says. ‘The vessel’s thingness does not lie at all in the material of which it consists, but in the void that it holds’ (167). The thingness of a text can be exemplified by the moment in *Childism* where the **actor** Petra Fransson lies on the floor speaking the most severe account of rape. The concrete **words** and the

story they tell holds a void that may be experienced as absent voices, bodies, places and things **unknown** to the audience but still possible to sense.

Heidegger points to the ways in which the void of the jug, through its function of pouring and giving, connects to other things, such as the spring where the water comes from where a rock dwells, ‘and in the rock dwells the dark slumber of the earth, which receives the rain and dew of the sky’ (170). This leads him to the ways in which every thing stands in relation to other things. It also evokes Buddhist philosophy (Heidegger is known to have been influenced by Buddhism and Zen philosophy mainly through his contact with Zen scholar D.T. Suzuki (Boon et al., 2015: 8)), where for instance Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh speaks of what he calls ‘inter-being’ (2012). Pulling out a sheet of paper Hanh argues that without earth, rain, and sunshine, the trees that we make the paper from cannot grow. Therefore, the paper and the sunshine inter-are. **Buddhism** argues that everything is empty of a separate independent being, which means it is full of everything as potential of materialisation. In this thinking and our daily encounter with things, there is a tension between how much **reality** is concealed and revealed.

In his thorough exploration of what a thing is Tristan Garcia (2010) argues that ‘a thing is nothing other than the difference between *that which is in this thing* and *that in which this thing is*’ (13). The thing can thus be understood as a threshold or a bubble or perhaps as a sounding board, a skin, a membrane or a springboard, however perforated so that things can move in and out of it. Garcia is concerned with the meaning of things as that which takes place between things, including thoughts, ideas and human bodies. One cannot do without the concept of thing, he says, ‘but neither can one fix it at some determination; a thing will always be a material thing, an idea, or a concept’ (38). Every thing is conditioned; it means it is always in a context, connected to other things, becoming

something other than itself, formed by its conditions. However, this process of becoming something is not reducing things to be only what it is conditioned into. It lingers between being what it is and being what it is not. Things exist in other things, and things exist in **relation** to other things. A thing can never be reduced to what it is composed of: ‘A star is the difference between what composes a star and what a star is [conceptually]’ (118). The mud that is created from dirt and water on stage in *Childism* becomes a thing that can hold any associations the audience reflects into it given the specific context of child **abuse**. However, it is also simply a thing that consists of dirt (bacteria, rotten leaves etc.), water and air.

The question of how much things are connected or separated is discussed within object-oriented philosophy. What seems to have become a common understanding is that things are autonomous entities, but that they each consist of various other entities. Graham Harman is especially interested to stress the fact that things are not dependent on other things to exist. A thing holds all potentials needed for transformation and motion within itself. However, there are multiple relations between things implying that we can never completely understand, perceive or comprehend objects and things. Harman is interested in the sensual relation or communication between things, such as the mud and the hands touching it in *Childism*. He proclaims that elements are the *notes* of sensual objects that make them able to relate. The fact that we relate sensually to things, which is the only way we can relate to them, is the way we are able to find ‘ourselves *face to face* with the interior of an object, with its internal magma or inner plasma’ (Harman, 2010: 172, my emphasis). However, when things demand of us to face them, it does not imply that we can comprehend them fully. The question remains: are we even able to realise what we are face to face with? What is the stuff in the bowl on the table in the room in Fredrikstad?

What we need to do in order to have an object-oriented or materialist view is to tune down the urge to grasp a unit and to create something intelligible from our encounter with things in the world. Like many of the other thinkers in this field, Morton is concerned with how objects withdraw in their essence.

Withdrawn doesn't mean hard to find or even impossible to find yet still capable of being visualized or mapped or plotted. *Withdrawn* doesn't mean spatially, or materially or temporally *hidden* yet capable of being found, if only in theory.

Withdrawn means beyond any kind of access, any kind of perception or map or plot or test or extrapolation.

(Morton, 2013: 54)

Can we encounter and go into relation with the documentary text or the mud in the bowl — or the image of it projected onto a screen on the other side of the room, or the sound of it when moved by hands — without understanding or having knowledge about what it really is? Can we halt our need to conceptualize and capture the images our mind creates in the encounter? What happens if we rather use our senses, our material bodies to hear, smell and feel our skin and stomach go cold or warm? What vibrations are triggered in our psychophysical system in order to experience other layers of meaning and understanding? There is a deep ambiguity in the being of things, which can be understood as what Morton identifies as the rift between the essence of a thing and the appearance of it caused by a playful and magic causality (Morton, 2013: 56). The mud (or the water or the pearls also used in *Childism*) is a thing referring both to water and dirt, as well as the mud we see in the bowl and all the connotations it gives in the context of the presentation. Simultaneously it cannot be reduced to any of those things, but exists as a thing beyond our experience, perception and knowledge of it. This is how the mud becomes likened to Heidegger's vessel holding the void as a gift.

Text-thing

A materialist practice of staging documents has been tested out both on the sides of the dramaturg as well as the **actors** and **dancer**. It has been interesting and fruitful in this context to think of and work with a documentary text understood as a **thing**, because of the way it challenges ego-driven desires and the Western cultural obsession with individualised emotionality so present in many theatre productions. Most challenging has been to understand how the documentary text-thing gathers things. We have come to experience the *text-thing* as a bridge with a connective function carried by the sounds and movements. To explore the text and how it becomes a thing means to see the text as a relational and connective tool through which proximity, intimacy, trust, power, violence, distrust, and distance are played out and presenced. Breath is an ethical tool when performers relate to text as a thing; it is a way to touch the thing with air, vocal cords, tongue, and mouth. It is a way to give **time**, be tender, and endure and stay with violence, love, or any other action presenced by the text-thing without it belonging to anyone. However, it is not possible to reject it completely as not belonging. Text as a thing within performance becomes an occasion and a place to rehearse, negotiate and exercise **ethics**.

We have explored ways of relating to the material of so-called documentary performance in the living moment by trying to withdraw from the natural impulse to interpret. This withdrawal can be obtained by not becoming attached to ideas, thoughts, emotions and impulses that arise. It implies thinking and feeling but not necessarily acting on those energetic movements, in an attempt to communicate the performer's personal reactions to the audience. Rather the idea is to let them pass, withdraw and listen in order to open up a relational space where the encounter with the text-thing can happen. **Interpretation**, on the other hand, means going into an inventive state with the material where we add or project our own view onto it. This can be understood as a form of assault, an injustice, an

attempt to colonize, and control the thing. It is a way to make something intelligible so as to keep a privileged position of power towards the thing, so as to keep one's own sensibility and emotionality under control. Interpretation is difficult to avoid, but instead of spending preparatory time on conceptualisation, the focus lies on the moment of **speaking** and sharing the text-thing with an **audience**, **listening** and asking what it may mean in each moment and context. Text-things can surprise the speaker, revealing new aspects each time they are spoken. One central question in this practice is how to avoid taking ownership of material when giving it aesthetic form.

Heidegger is concerned with the **gathering** quality of things: with the mirror effect between what is revealed and what is concealed. In the context of performance text it could mean taking into account not only the concrete meaning of the text, how it is heard and concretely understood, what ideological systems it expresses and supports, and what cultural images it presents and repeats, but also how it connects to other bodies not present, other contexts and spaces, things and materials—what is not seen or expressed, poetics, affect, desire, **body** dynamics, physical **rhythms**, what it nourishes, what conversations it instigates, what it puts in motion, and what it connects. It would mean to explore the text through what it reveals and what it conceals, or what it articulates (gives space) and what it does not articulate (leaves outside). Working with the text-things on child **abuse** showed that all those other partly unfamiliar things, which one can still sense, became extremely present. It was so much and so painful to hold and stay with; it gave a feeling of heavy weight during the workshop process.

Tenderness may be a relevant tool for performers to approach a documentary text-thing. It may be a direction away from **anthropocentrism** or perhaps a way to connect different realms as well as performer and audience. However, it is important here to stress that

tenderness first and foremost implies spending time and listening through sight, hearing, smelling, and touch—in short, to experience the context of the text in the moment. In the context of performance, that does not mean to always be nice, soft or kind to the material, nor necessarily to be slow or have a soft tone of **voice**. Tenderness as an activity of preservation is to spend time with something in order for it to come into being, to find form. Spending time together can happen in all kinds of modes and tempos. Performing a text-thing demands a distance big enough to sense and discover how and where the relation to the material lies at the specific moment of performing it. How do I relate today, at this moment? Can I relate? Do I feel close to or removed from what the text carries and has to offer? Do I agree or disagree with the **words**? How do I feel and think about them right now? Am I seeing, hearing, sensing layers of depth, breadth or surface? In this way of relating to the text-thing, you are constantly questioning the potential layers of meaning and experiences that it gathers and mirrors, inviting the audience to take part in this quest. Playing with rhythm, tempo, volume and pitch opens up the text further for unexpected layers of meaning. If the performer stays open to improvisation, and listens well to the text, new and surprising constructions of meaning may be discovered.

Can the words be detached from the body that spoke it and lived it? What happens to them then? In the context of performance, I believe what happens is the ‘thinging of the thing’, to use Heidegger’s concept. The words become a void for the audiences to fill and pour from, and for the performers to fill and pour out, each time they utter the words. For the informant it may offer a chance to hear, see, and sense her own stories, distanced and detached from her body, creating a space to be free from it, which may support the process of becoming a **survivor** rather than a **victim**. Cathy Caruth writes about trauma and how what she calls *history* emerges from the oscillation between a crisis of death and the correlative crisis of life; that it is articulated when understanding fails (Caruth, 1996).

Further she refers to Paul de Man's text 'The Resistance to Theory' where he speaks about the relationship between a puppet and the puppeteer, and how De Man suggests that 'the dance of the puppets represents a particular model of a written text, a text created by the relation between the puppeteer and the puppets' (81). The text-things created during this project are constructions growing out of the **relation** between the seen and the hidden, the revealed and the concealed, the remembered and the forgotten, the concrete and the abstracted. So the suggestion here is that the text becomes a thing because it lingers in those spaces where the relation and tension between these kinds are played out. As such, the text-things also function as a membrane or spring board, connected to the way one can understand Garcia's concept of the thing: as something occurring in the liminal space between that which is in the thing, and that which the thing is in. At several occasions during after talks of *Woe*, *Encountering Loss* and *Childism*, audiences have commented that it is difficult to sense what is real and what is fiction in the presentations. This is the perceived dichotomy that needs to be overcome by artists, audiences, critics, performance theorists and the culture at large in which they operate.

During the process of working with *Childism*, the NGO Save the Children (Redd Barn) were launching a campaign to raise awareness for ways society can deal with sexual abuse of children. They arranged public presentations of the campaign in several cities throughout Norway, amongst them Fredrikstad. There were teachers, social workers, nurses, police and representatives from various support organisations speaking about the subject from their perspective. We were invited to perform a short excerpt of material we were working on in *Childism*. The dancer Henriette was available but not the actor Petra Fransson. This situation gave the dramaturg the chance to perform parts of the text material in front of an audience. Her experience performing one of the most explicit monologues of child abuse coming from our informant was a feeling of weight. It felt heavy, dark and

almost immobile. She felt dragged down, fighting to be able to hear and let the words find their form, and establish a space between the text and herself.

The experience of uttering these parts of documentary text made her realise how hard it is to stay away from the text, so to speak. How easy it is to be emotionally drawn into the content of what it is saying, and to feel empathy, repulsion, and sorrow for the victim of these acts. She had to struggle to free the text from her own sentimental projections of how it must have been or could have been, or how sad it all was, which also locks the informant into the position of being a victim. Her feelings about the situation the text describes stood in danger of overshadowing the content and context of the text itself. She had to struggle to keep a certain space open between her own body and the sounds she projected into the space, forming the words of that specific text. She had to struggle to listen to it and hear it and trust that the text in its encounter not only with her body and voice but with everything in that space at the time, could express much more than she would ever be able to imagine, understand, control or express as a subjective 'I'. Rather she tried to touch the text as a reaching out in a mutual encounter through listening to it, through **breathing** and **speaking** into it, and try to be with it through a tender patience as it performed its own echoing among the causal traces in the audience and that space at large. The actor Petra Fransson was able to handle the struggle described above in more adequate ways through the use of her acting skills. Being sensitive and caring for the text-thing, she worked on being specific in relation to each text-thing, figuring out her approach and relation to each of them. This implies a certain degree of holding back the actor's own emotional expressions in order to keep a distance. It is not about producing emotions, and neither about suppressing one's own emotional responses. Rather it is about tuning down one's own reactions to the text-things in order to give them space to come into being and unfold.

To free the text-thing is about staying next to it, to hang out with it for a while to see what it reveals. It implies patience rather than creation, waiting rather than constructing, and leaving the space open for unanswered questions. This may feel passive from the side of the artist, but it is rather an active opening up for things to emerge. Projecting further interpretation onto the material distracts and makes the listening more difficult. This is what is meant with leaving the text alone. Science has shown that every thing, including humans if they are to be seen as things, are made of particles. Each particle consists of even smaller particles and so on, and finally there is nothing thus ‘nothing really exists’ or as Hodder comments ‘[A]t the atomic and sub-atomic level we see that matter ‘becomes’ rather than ‘is’ (2012: 209). If this is the case, we can speak of the ways in which matter flows from one form to the other, and into and with each other. Almost like a dance or choreographic movement of energies. When speaking of ethics in his concluding chapter, Hodder is concerned with how difficult it is to stop our dance with things, constantly creating new and broader networks of entanglements. It means that when we use text-things in theatre and performance production we enter into a relationship, which creates new things, influencing and changing us as much as it affects our informant and his or her **memory** of the ‘true story’. Any revival, remembering, reconstruction or representation changes the material, for as we have learnt to think, there is no such thing as an exact copy. Repetition is always a different version of the same.

Ting

The word **thing** in English can be traced etymologically to mean *assembly, action, matter, and thing*. In Norwegian the equivalent *ting* can be traced to old Norse language meaning *assembly, being, creature, and thing* (dualjuridik, No Date). Heidegger writes in his essay ‘The Thing’ (2001) that the English word *thing* and the German word *ding* both originally carried the meaning of assembly or gathering (172-173). The word ‘ting’ was established

and in official use in the Nordic countries during the Viking age where the ‘ting’ was a geographic place to practice democracy. In historical times (in Iceland the *Althingi* was established in 930 CE) the ‘ting’ met regularly and it was typically held in a field where a ‘veband’ was set up to mark the area of the ting. The occasions of the ‘ting’ gathered families and officials, and were often connected to feasts, religious rites and rituals. Political discussions took place, disputes were solved, laws were constituted, and decisions were taken. The ‘ting’ was presided by law speakers who knew the laws by heart. Land-owners had the right to vote at the ‘ting’, which was a political event or gathering primarily ‘testing power relations and affiliations between local leaders and their supporters’ (Pálsson 2005: 252). The ‘ting’ was a space that ideally offered, carried and contained an ethical call to those present. Historically however, hierarchical power relations often dominated the scene. In the Nordic countries the word ‘ting’ still forms part of how political assemblies are named. In Iceland the parliament is called the *Allting* or *Althingi* (ting of all things), in Denmark it is called *Folketing* (the people’s ting), and in Norway it is called *Storting* (The Great Assembly).

The ethical call of such a public space has been thoroughly explored by Hannah Arendt who speaks of the importance of public space as a space of political action and speech, and as a space where we realise our human possibilities and potentials. Arendt calls them spaces of appearance. Those are spaces where culture is formed and those are the spaces of politics dependent on her notion of action and speech. Arendt differentiates between action and behaviour. Behaviour is our repetitive habits while action is about creating something new through rising to an occasion, to speak out. To Arendt action is unpredictable and creates something new not yet seen or known. Action is about revealing oneself in relation to a plurality of people assembled in a concrete space. This means that anyone raising their **voices** during one of the **audience** conversations in *Encountering Loss* or *Childism* is

making such an action. Arendt thinks that a coming together and being in **relation** is the condition for human action (Arendt 1996, Young-Bruehl 2006). Judith Butler has recently been exploring the power of public assembly and plural action in our contemporary society (2014) expanding the idea of performativity to not only be about language through the speech act, but to include a bodily coming together, be it in motion, stillness, verbal or not. Thus she challenges Arendt's emphasis on action as speech. Butler argues for assembly as a coming together where gesture and movement (or stillness) also speaks. 'The assembly is already **speaking** before it utters any words. The 'we' that expresses itself is already speaking before vocalisation' she claims (2014b). However, Butler also stresses the plurality of an assembly as a coming together of differences but still able to act in concert without ending up in conformity. Bodies that act collectively in a public space has been exemplified recently in key actions of the 'Arab spring', the Occupy movement city square occupations from 2008-2011, including performance artist Erdem Gunduz and his action called 'The Standing Man' in Turkey June 2013.

The word 'ting' has also come to mean *negotiation* and *case*, as there were cases negotiated at the 'ting'. From there it has developed into a more imprecise use of the word pointing mainly to objects in contemporary daily speech. We speak of things when speaking of objects. However, according to some philosophers things signifies something **unknown** or unidentifiable as opposed to objects. In Norwegian language there is the word *gjenstand* (in German *gegenstand*), which is the proper word for object. Directly translated this word means *standing before* or *facing*. This trajectory has inspired the research into the notion of the performance space as a 'ting', an assembly, and a space for practicing **ethics** related to ways we deal with things in performance practice.

Theatre-ting

In Fredrikstad, Norway, on the 14th November 2015 **audience** members enter a space where three women are seated, occupied with sewing and embroidering. *Childism* starts by recalling the many **conversations**, stories, thoughts, and traumatic experiences that have been shared across the activity of embroidering, sewing and knitting together, all around the world. Everyone in the audience were handed a small plastic bag with threads, needles, some fabric and pearls, and were encouraged to also sew during the **presentation**. Some people used the opportunity of sewing to occasionally move their attention away from the **abuse** that was being spoken of and sometimes explained in detail by the performers, while others found the sewing to be a point of distraction, and even exclusion because they were invited to perform an action that some found difficult. However, the sewing is only an offer not a requirement, and the sewing kit is also a thing with a call to us – if it is opened or not. The reference to the activity of sewing is offered to audiences and performers alike. It is an invitation to engage with things and materials, which ideally puts audiences and performers on equal footing in relation to the material presented. Possibly it could have been made clearer to the audience that the sewing they were invited to take part in is far removed from sewing as a performance of skills, or creating something within the conventions of beauty or traditions of sewing. The invitation was solely to sense the material in relation to the **text-things** and other things presented, and to part take in an activity that has generated many situations of sharing trauma. The **time** shared lingers somewhere between being a performance in the traditional sense of someone doing something in front of someone watching, and simply being together, sharing images, impressions, and reflecting on child abuse and the relationship between adult's and children's realities in our society.



This research takes the notion of the ‘**ting**’ as an assembly and a concrete space for practicing democracy, and uses it as a model to reframe contemporary **documentary theatre**. The term *theatre-ting* is proposed as an aesthetic form. The theatre-ting is potentially a place where democracy and **ethics** can be rehearsed and challenged. It implies that in the theatre-ting, specific areas of social and political concern can be staged and tested out in a safe artistic environment. Within this space, various ways to deal with a situation, a problem, or a topic of social interest can be practiced including crossing our ethical borders. The presentation of *Childism* raises the question of whether one can share specific images of rape and abuse in public space without becoming voyeuristic or pornographic.

The framework of the ‘ting’ can be a useful concept to enhance ethical awareness in relation to documentary performance practice. There is obviously a parallel to the Greek agora, which traditionally sets off the Western theatre history. The agora originally has the same meaning as the Nordic ting: **gathering** place or assembly. Both functioned as a place

to solve disputes between family clans, as a place for religious rituals and feasts, and also as a market place. It is interesting in this context to mention Plato's concept of the *chora*, which Hans-Thies Lehmann points to as a concept mirroring the poetics of contemporary theatre practice (2006: 145). He calls today's practice a '*restitution of chora*', which implies a theatrical deconstruction that turns theatre into what he calls *chora-graphy*. In his most recent research and publication on the theatrical dimensions of Greek tragedy (2013a), Lehmann emphasises the power of the collective experience with reference to Jean-Luc Nancy's concept of 'being singular plural', where the singular being comes into existence as a consequence of sharing common worlds. Tragedy, says Lehmann, is both a sensual as well as reflective experience, which concerns transgression of norms: social, political, and theatrical (2013b). In his lecture in Oslo, Lehmann emphasised the ways the 'real' is inserted, or breaks into the fictional in contemporary theatre without dissolving its framework. It is when the perceiver is becoming insecure about what they are witnessing (**reality**, fiction or neither), when the theatrical norms and conventions are broken, that individual transgression may happen. Not as catharsis but as a fundamental shaking and questioning of our concept of self, because tragedy in the theatre transgresses accepted ethical behaviour. In *Encountering Loss*, the moment when the performers spoke the **words** of the Norwegian terrorist Anders Behring Breivik, without announcing that the text was his, became such a moment for some audience members. They had previously heard the young performers' testimonies, thoughts and opinions on the subject of loss, which triggers a sympathetic **listening** on the audience's part. When in this mode words were spoken, which was seriously troubling, they got confused. Were these the words of the youth? Could they agree? Slowly throughout the text, it was revealed where it came from, and audiences could place both the text-thing and their own subjective thinking back into known territory. It was a strong feeling of ambivalence that occurred in many audience

members. Ambivalence is an important aspect of ethics. Helena Grehan suggests that responsibility can lead to ambivalence:

If a performance is successful in terms of its ability to engage spectators in a process of ethical reflection, it will leave them feeling ambivalent [...]

Ambivalence, as I understand it, then, is a form of radical unsettlement, an experience of disruption and interruption in which the anodyne is challenged.

(Grehan, 2009: 22)

The feeling of ambivalence was also present when Fransson spoke about concrete sexual abuse in *Childism*. Is it right to force spectators to listen to the description of such violent acts? The theatre-ting as a public arena is not a therapeutic space. It is a space that demands the spectator take responsibility when entering. The subject matter is made clear in all material about the ting, and attendance happens in full knowledge of what is to be dealt with at the theatre-ting. In the case of *Childism*, we have seen that this can create a feeling of ambivalence already when entering the space. What subjects willingly go to witness a performance and dialogue about child abuse? Is there space for resistance within the dynamics of theatrical spectatorship? To watch and hear about traumatic experience in the theatre staged as **documents** (truth) is demanding. Does theatrical spectatorship imply that agreeing to take part means to accept what takes place? On the other hand, what responsibility does the performance put on the audience members who feel there is little or no room to stand up and shout or stop the presentation? There are no clear dramaturgical solutions to how to handle and answer these questions, questions which may be unavoidable dimensions of documentary performance. It touches upon the general ethical question of the responsibility that comes with knowledge. However, these questions are perhaps also what makes the theatre-ting a potentially powerful and relevant arena for public exchange. What the theatre-ting can promise is a pre-digested version of difficult material, which can ensure the audience it will be safe although not prevented from

emotional reactions and discomfort. The artists working with the theatre-ting has willingly spent time with the material to give it a form that makes the topic accessible. They have done some work on behalf of the audience, have survived the process, and taken away some of the possible weight of guilt, shame, or grief from the audience, so they can face the topic both emotionally and reflexively. The artistic team has turned the material into a **dramaturgy** that is possible to handle on a level where it can be discussed as a shared collective issue. This is a dramaturgy that is able to relieve the audience of some of its anxiety about entering the space by explicitly stating that there is an organizing principle at work: a safety notice securing that ‘dramaturgy is at work’.

The Nordic *ting* connects to the Greek *Chora*, which means place or site in Greek language. It is said that Plato referred to the concept of *khora* as a place for a possible emancipatory experience, connected to the exercise of linguistic exchange situated in an encounter between the sensible and the intelligible. Historically *khora* is also a space, which is materialised but not fixed. Heidegger addressed *khora* in his discussion of the ‘clearing’ and dwelling as the moment and place in which being is formed. The theatre-ting may also be understood as a dwelling, a space to temporarily halt, breath, listen and contemplate in an otherwise fast moving global society. Heidegger is concerned with the notion of dwelling as that which separates humans from other species. In his text ‘Building, Dwelling, Thinking’ (2001), he explores the relationship between dwelling and building where the building is understood as the construction and appearance of things. In this context the thing is a building or a space that can be understood as a spatial construction, which temporarily gathers things, people, images, representations, thoughts and words. For there to be any building, there must be a dwelling, writes Heidegger. Dwelling implies a certain amount of duration and staying in one place to have time to clear the space for building and gathering. The basic character of dwelling is to spare, to

save, to preserve and to eventually set something free, Heidegger claims (2001: 148-149), which connects our idea of the theatre-ting to a certain kind of care and **tenderness** toward the text-things and other related things.

If we think of a thought, a movement, an image, a text, a sentence, or a sound as things equal to material things we can hold in our hands, then we might need to dwell in order for these things to come into presence. This thus becomes a premise for exchange and for collective experiences and organising. Dwelling also gives us time to experience and learn to live in **relation** to materiality of all kinds, giving time for things to come into presence through our listening and seeing what we face. We are dealing with preservation not as a maniacal way of preserving and halting a natural movement, development, and process of dissolving, but as something which helps anything come into its own being present.

Dwelling also implies violence by the fact that a clearance or a building always pushes away what was already present, creating an inside with a sense of belonging, and an outside with a sense of expulsion. The question is how mobile, transparent, and open for change the dwelling can be. Similarly, text and speech is always both inherently constructive, but also violent. A verbal construction will always push something else out of its territory, or **silence** that which is not spoken of. The notion of dwelling as a way of relating to and making things appear calls to mind Benso's concept of tenderness as a way to listen to the ethical call of things: 'according to the original meaning of ethos, ethics denotes "a dwelling place"' (Benso, 2000:130). Here we see the spatial aspect of ethics, which means that there has to be a space (to dwell) for the one's taking part in the ethical relational situation. Theatre and performance can offer such spaces.

How is a theatre-ting assembled in its contemporary form? It became urgent to reflect on this question after the first presentation of *Childism*. This particular ting was presented

within the educational institution that funds the research project (Norwegian Theatre Academy/ Østfold University College), and the audience was a mix of friends, family, tutors, theatre students and professionals. Although the theatre-ting ideally was thought to function for any group of audience, the topic of child abuse should perhaps rather be presented to a more targeted audience due to its challenging content. A theatre-ting might need to place itself inside environments where it naturally can assemble people who are concerned with a specific topic. In the case of *Childism*, it could be representatives from juridical contexts, or presenting it to students of health and social science or even high school students. This would also demand a stronger dramaturgy of the conversation with the audience, something that is difficult with a more mixed and general audience. However, it is of importance to be able to share this topic to a general audience as well, even though it will be difficult to be in the audience when the topic is of such a severe nature. *Encountering Loss* on the other hand dealt with the topic of loss in a much more general and lighter way, which was more adaptable to a mixed audience. In that context, it was constructive to keep the dramaturgy of the audience conversations as open as possible, letting any reflection or questions that the audience needed to ‘presence’ come to the surface.

Much post-dramatic performance has informed the present practices of documentary theatre. In turn the post-dramatic theatre has been influenced by the early avant-garde movements of Futurist and Dada performance, which pointed to variety theatre as a theatrical form where audiences participated, as opposed to the traditional bourgeoisie theatre, said to create passive spectatorship. In the theatre-ting audiences do not have to participate as actively as was ideal for the Futurists (through singing, commenting and so on), although they might do so. There is no such great divide between passive and active spectatorship in what the theatre-ting proposes. Participation may come as a post-

performance talk, a discussion with audience members after the presentation, or it may involve active action from audience members during the presentation. This issue is less important as spectating, doing actions, or listening and reflecting are here considered equally active and participatory. Participation in the theatre-ting is already implicit due to the (temporary) collective situation of physically sharing space and time. Audiences are being asked to pay attention to the topic, to set aside time to relate to documents of abuse, loss or anything else. The theatre-ting is flexible in its listening to the documentary material at hand. There is not one method of staging documents of any topic. The topic and the things at hand demand different ways of staging. The artists need to follow and listen, being aware of the reciprocal movement between giving form and being formed. The one factor that characterises the theatre-ting is to look for simplicity in relation to the theatre machinery using relatively simple means of technique, scenery, costumes etc. The theatre-ting has a form, but is still flexible. It can be established quite easily compared to mainstream theatre productions. In this perspective, the theatre-ting represents an environmentally-friendly way of creating theatrical events, which can be possible to realise without substantial economical resources.

In *Woe*, as well as in *Encountering Loss* and *Childism*, montage, collage and a mix of aesthetic genres are used to avoid a linear reading of the material. Grehan (2009) writes about the Australian production *MAMU*, which concerns the relation between aboriginal Australians and the white population. Some critics argued that *MAMU* ran the risk of trivialising the material because it mixed genres. In regard to the projects *Encountering Loss* and *Childism*, this research argues that it is exactly the trivialising and mix of aesthetic means that gives agency and power to the project, and which makes it accessible for an audience. Grehan also rightly argues: ‘the fact that it is precisely its messiness and its use of multiple modes that allows the performance to fracture any preconceived ideas

about reception and to generate a powerful sense of intimacy and proximity within the space' (69).

In *Childism* and *Encountering Loss*, the dramaturgy consists of a number of text-things set up in relation to each other without linear connections between them. This structure allows for multiple entrance points to the topic, and a larger space for meaning production. The sewing proposes split attention on behalf of members of the audience who are not used to sewing. In a culture that is obsessed with preserving, archiving, and not 'losing' any given information, this may be experienced as frustrating. However, within a 'theatre-ting' working with an **ethics of the unknown**, the dramaturgy is constructed in such a way that it allows the individual audience to occasionally lose attention to what takes place on stage. It is not necessary to hear or see everything in order to engage in a conversation around the topic. The audience is invited to spend time with their bodies in relation to what takes place in the space and each individual can create their own connections between things, forming authentic impressions and experiences. What is asked for is to give of one's time, to dare to enter a space full of things and documents of abuse or loss. The material of the sewing kit provides as much information, stories, and impressions as anything else in its encounter with a body and the given context. Derek Paget claims that '[t]he principle of montage as an alternative means of structuring a dramatic piece was vital to the development of Documentary Theatre as a new genre' (1990: 43). He connects this to experimental movements within film and theatre in Russia after the Russian Revolution, especially as represented by Eisenstein and Meyerholdt. The montage technique was also a way to avoid the naturalistic style connecting to individual, subjective story lines reflecting the imperative of the bourgeois theatre.

It is a goal for the theatre-ting to reveal the ways in which the social and political plane of reality is connected to the personal. The point is to focus on social and political structures that individuals are part of, rather than on the personal story and testimony, which is still the dominant dramaturgy of contemporary documentary and verbatim theatre. The concept of theatre-ting shares many of the intentions of Brecht's Epic Theatre. However, the method is different. Brecht was interested in educating his audience, as he looked upon knowledge as commodity. He took a hierarchical position affirmed also in the way he practiced his role as dramatist and director. This is far removed from the position of the dramaturg within this research project, in which knowledge is seen as an embodied practice, never exhausted and always changing, where what is known will always also be **unknown**, and where existing hierarchies are challenged at large. This research does not reflect Marxist scholarship, but builds on a phenomenological scholarly tradition. The theatre-ting has developed from embodied experiences rather than an ideological position. However, both Brecht's Marxist position and the phenomenological position deal with a set of beliefs and values. Those undermining this research hopefully come forth through the collection of words and texts presented here, as well as through the live presentations. The theatre-ting is a term that may be useful in order to question the truth claim of much documentary works. The question of documentary versus fictional material becomes less relevant, which is why we need a different term. The theatre-ting is neither documentary nor fictional, it is neither 'true' nor 'false'. It offers reflections from a group of people on a certain theme or topic that concern our shared social and political realities. It uses theatrical, artistic, poetic and philosophical means to do so.

Time

In order to free the text and render it present in a space, we need to hang out with it. To hang out with someone or something is often connected to words and phrases like relaxing,

spending or wasting time together, doing nothing in particular. We need to utter the text many times without any specific purpose: to have the time (and space) to constantly create new **relations** with it by playing around with it. To listen and to relate takes time: to give time for complexity to develop, time to contradict, time to stroke, time to love and hate and taste. Things have their own duration on the inevitable road to change, decomposition, and transformation. Hanging out with material is about **commitment**. Is commitment about love, or perhaps love is about spending time together, which the Little Prince in Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's story argues (1946)? He loves the rose on the planet he left, even though she is demanding and comes across as self-centred. However, they have been in relation over quite some time, hanging out together, which has brought them to various places together and apart. Time is the way the Little Prince explains love.

Adrian Heathfield (2011) asks what ethical responsibility the dramaturg carries when entering the institutional machine. How can the dramaturg resist the instrumental and technocratic forces pushing the creation process, and how can he or she resist those interests? What seems to be lacking in institutional contexts driven by the market, limited working hours, rules and regulations, and employees ruled by various different union interests, is time. Time to develop relationships, time to care for the ways relationships are always oscillating between proximity and distance, time to listen, time to tender for transformative processes, time to let ambivalences and differences flourish, giving attention to ways we touch and are touched by things, other bodies and their stories. When employed actors are to work with a documentary text time is a challenge because of the demands put on them, often rehearsing in the day time, performing in the evenings and doing commercials during lunch. The experience of bringing 'amateurs' into productions with professionals in institutional theatres turns out to involve additional challenges because of the lack of time. Time becomes an ethical matter when the shared time is

limited. It halts the processes of developing relationships, letting things be ‘presenced’, **listening**, and letting things happen. Working with an **ethics of the unknown** is close to impossible when there is a lack of time for those processes to flourish. Time to care, be tender and provide space to the material is a luxury in these contexts. Flexibility in the working situation is always important for a dramaturg: to be able to adjust to the process, the needs of the other artistic **collaborators**, and the demands of the material itself. However, it may be as important when coupled with a certain amount of inflexibility: To resist and to question, in order to produce time and space for preserving the unknown.

Time emerges from relations between things. The meaning of an object is in its future, in how it relates to other objects, including those objects that constitute its parts. Relations are hollowed out from the inside by the uncanniness of the objects between which they play. This hollowness just is time. To figure out what a relation is means to build another relation.

(Morton, 2013: 93)

The combination of a long time to reflect, digest, and relate to the material over the span of a year, and the short time of intense workshop sessions spending time together constructing and testing out material on the floor became essential for the function of the theatre-ting. It was a relatively long time commitment on behalf of the collaborators, but also a relatively short time for creating and constructing. Thus a different kind of flexibility was demanded from what is usually expected of performers and dramaturgs within many theatre institutions. The relational space is time, thus time is **ethics** and ethics is time. Ethics of the unknown is the time where you do not know what will manifest, be ‘presenced’, be acted and reacted, and be heard and listened to. It is time for **breathing** together with patience, **tenderness** and humility. **Words** and stories may be ‘presenced’ in time.

U

Unknown

- This part of the kingdom is not so good.
- This used to be all rock, and now it is sand, and then one day it's gonna be dust and then the whole island will be dust, and I don't even know what comes after dust.
- I never heard that. Come on, that can't happen.

(The dialogue was performed during the first presentation of *Encountering Loss* 23rd February 2013 and is taken from the movie *Where the Wild Things Are* (2009) directed by Spike Jonze)

V

Victim

Does the story, or the experiences behind the story shared in a documentary performance, belong to the informant? How can we turn her fate, pain, and suffering seen from the perspective of 'life itself' in the direction of positive **relations**? How is she turned into a **survivor** who can teach us something, rather than a victim who needs help? Rosi Braidotti speaks of 'life itself' as a philosophical position of bio politics, hybrid social identities, and new modes of multiple belonging (Braidotti, 2010: 204). This, she argues, may offer new ways of social participation and community building, addressing questions of our relationship to loss and practices of mourning as a bio-political concern (201). Her ideas of nomadic subjectivity imply considering how bios (the discursive biology) and zoe (nature, animal) both represent aspects of the **body**: bios is defined as intelligent life while zoe is the gritty and poor aspect. 'That they intersect in the human body turns the physical self into a contested space and into a political arena' (207). Thus the body, the 'meat called our "self" [is] expressing the abject and simultaneously divine potency of life' (208). This in turn leads to a possible consideration of the body as **thing** or as an **assemblage** of things (understood as biological matter and bacteria cultures). From this perspective our body and

the experiences our bodies live through are not ‘ours’. We are in a state of constant change and moving towards death where matter transforms into something else: earth, plants, animals etc. Braidotti is concerned with ways in which humans can become active in processes of transformation. For her, we need to approach the world through affectivity and not cognition. She admits however, that changes are difficult, and thus we need to take care of them. Pain is an unavoidable side of life itself, which may instigate change.

Braidotti calls for a way of life where humans engage ‘through assemblages or webs of interconnections with all that lives’ (210). As she explains: ‘This is just one life, not *my* life. The life in “me” does not answer to my name: “I” is just passing’ (210). To endure pain and suffering is needed for any transformation to happen; it is to be able to stay with vulnerability without promises of compensation or quests for meaning. This she claims ‘is achieved through a sort of depersonalization of the event, which is the ultimate ethical challenge’ (213). In the performance *Everything Remains* (2015), the dancer and actor Juli Apponen found relief in the process of objectifying her own body in pain, which also became a path toward **compassion**. In most healing practices this is seen as an unhealthy distancing. Our informant confirms that an experience of trauma is about experiencing the flesh as thing, which is perhaps neither about personalizing nor depersonalizing. However, understanding the body as thing may offer a way out of victimization by acknowledging the wound and the pain, but not identifying with it and holding on to it. As we have seen, one of the characteristics of a thing is transformation. Through sharing and detaching personally from her experiences, our informant may have the chance to transform her sufferings and rework them into other positive **relations**. It demands a process of staying with and accepting the pain and the wound in order to let it go, along with the quest of origin, guilt, compensation, and meaning. Transforming her experiences into texts that are presented publicly through the specific ways of **listening**, **breathing**, working with

distance and **rhythm** that this research offers, is hopefully a way to open a space where transformation may be possible.

Voice

When working with the **text-thing** as a bridge between performer and audience, the voice comes to form the building blocks of that bridge. The text and the voice are two separate things, however they are in **relation** with and ‘presencing’ each other. The voice leaves the **body** of the performer and travels through the space, entering the ears of the **audiences**. It takes place in space, and it does not belong to anyone. The voice is also the vessel that Heidegger writes about. It is the void that can be filled and emptied as a gift of pouring out whatever is **withdrawn** and revealed in it when formed by a specific text. The voice is sound waves and vibrant matter that trigger other vibrations, movements and transformations in bodies, things and spaces. We can discover things through learning to notice those vibrations sensually. We can add other layers of meaning to what our culture has taught us is the concrete meaning of the articulated **words**. When words touch us in these ways, things are transformed and given new shapes.

[I]t’s not that voice really gives access to the hidden depth of meaning — it’s that voice is an object in its own right, vibrating with uncanny overtones. Like ekphrasis (heightened, vivid description), like metaphor, voice leaps forth towards us, unleashing its density and opacity. Voice has what Harman calls *allure*, the sensual energy of the dimension in which causality happens.

(Morton, 2013: 85)

A voice may be exhausted, slowly running out of words and coming to a rest. However, even when silent, it is still a voice. A silent voice is breath in a body forming part of the murmur of the world (Lingis 1994), not yet articulated. Are words on paper, the act of

writing, and a body moving also a voice? Can writing, moving, and **speaking** exhaust the voice? We are coming close to a time for **breathing**, for pauses and perhaps for **silence**.

W

Words

Being with, hanging out with, **time**!

No arguing, no writing, no explaining

Staying

Next to another **body**, to other bodies

matters

It does not matter *what* we say, what matters is the fact *that* we say something.

It is the fact of sharing

Staying next to

Spending time

Together

It is the togetherness

Words flow, float between

Like stuff, like things we exchange

It *does* matter what it is

It matters *how* it happens

The words can be like pearls we share

We look at them together

We care for them

Words can be like a whiplash, a cut from a knife, or a straight jacket

We look at them together

We care

The words bind us together

They are the things we look at to learn and understand

Collectively

It is a gift to feel part of a collection of bodies, words and things

Stuff to explore

Together

It is difficult to feel rejected or expelled

Then there is

Silence

sometimes she does not want to say anything anymore

that is also a precious sharing

of life

Withdrawn

Wazaan: "Keep Moving Forward"

Keep moving forward, even if you no longer believe. Keep going even when you've lost sight of your goal, keep going even when reason paralyzes you, even when you discover the futility of what going forward really means. Keep going even if you've lost all pride, all ability to hope. Keep moving forward. I've never seen the night, but they say that it's dark. So, leave — both of you, leave before daybreak. In the morning I'll tell them all that the girl who sings has gone, I'll tell them that the young man who came back to his ancestral land has departed again. I'll curse them, I'll tell them: "Listen to the rage of youth that will make you the vanquished of the vanquished. Youth is furious with you. Youth is leaving and the sun is leaving with it". Simone, Wilfrid, take the body and leave before dawn. In the morning I'll tell them misfortune has just struck the village.

(Mouawad, 2011: 78)

X

Y

Z

Appendices

- Documentation from *Encountering Loss*, second presentation at the National Theatre in Oslo 17/08/2013, in Norwegian (not translated nor subtitled). Available at: <https://vimeo.com/99483111> (the first 33 minutes)
- Documentation from *Childism*, Norwegian Theatre Academy/ Østfold University College 14/11/2015, in English. Available at: <https://vimeo.com/user28859799/review/152328615/f34842835e>, password: barn123
- Ethics consent form for collaborators in *Encountering Loss*
- Ethics consent form for collaborating artists of *Childism* and *WOE*
- Institutional consent form

The research for this project was submitted for ethics consideration under the reference DTP 12/009 the Department of Drama, Theatre & Performance and was approved under the procedures of the University of Roehampton's Ethics Committee on July 19th 2012.

Where subjects are named their approval of this act and the wording of their contribution has been agreed in advance of submission. The anonymous source has read and agreed to their representation in this thesis.

ETHICS COMMITTEE

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Project:

Poetics of Ethics – negotiating relationships in performance practice. (working title)

Brief Description of Research Project:

My research investigates the relational dynamics of performance, discussing proximity, trust, power, and responsibility in artistic collaborations and how these factors influence the relationship between performers and viewers in contemporary works. I seek to reinvigorate the terms 'relation' and 'presence' in performance practice, experimenting with new vocabulary from ethical philosophy to re-frame artistic encounters. Inquiring into how ethics is practiced and performed, I will develop relationships with specific artists in the frame of three artistic collaborations. I will look at how ethics are played out in these practices focussing at my main concepts. This includes confronting my own ethical, emotional, artistic, and idealistic motives in an artistic collaboration. This process is an investigation into how my dramaturgical work informs, and re-frames these practices and aesthetics. My aim is to explore a language, or a poetics, for ethics in performance practice.

Investigator Contact Details:

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Consent Statement:

- I agree to take part in this project, and that parts of the process will be used in the research project of Camilla Eeg-Tverbakk. I am aware that the artistic process I am part of, will be reflected and analysed and become part of her research material.
- I am aware that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time.
- No private information exchanged during rehearsal and presentation periods will be utilized as part of this research project. However the personal stories I choose to share related to the themes discussed may become part of the public

presentations, and thus also part of the research, if I consent to the use of this kind of material. Any data of personal and private character will be password protected in the University if stored on a computer.

- I agree to the use and publication of images and live audio recordings of the rehearsal process and artistic result, as part of the submitted PhD thesis, published articles and as part of public lectures.
- I understand that I don't have any rights to the research results.
- My anonymity will only be kept if asked for specifically. In that case my participation in the project will be described by means of a fictive name and a fictive personal description.
- Some rehearsals during the process will be audio recorded and/or photographed as part of this research project. Consent for the use of such recordings and/or photos may be withdrawn at any time.
- I am aware that during the process I will be asked to reflect, analyse and comment on the content and theme of the play "Tideline/ Littoral", act out physical theatre exercises¹ in collaboration with the other participants, make research and volunteer to interview friends, relatives and other professionals, and keep a log book during the process.
- I am willing to take part in public presentations of the material I, and the group, choose to create for an audience. I am aware that these presentations will consist of material from the play, my own and other participant's research material and interviews, as well as some of my own personal stories that I have agreed to use. Consent for the use of any of my own material in the presentations can be withdrawn at any time during the workshop process.
- There will be a total of 4 weeks workshop time between February 2013 – February 2014. The working hours will be between 10.00 – 16.00 each day.

Participant:	If under 18, one of your parents have to sign here:
Name	Name.....
Signature	Signature.....
Date	Date.....

Please note: if you have a concern about any aspect of your participation or any other queries please raise this with the investigator. However, if you would like to contact an independent party please contact the Head of Department (or if the researcher is a student you can also contact the Director of Studies.)

Director of Studies Contact Details:

Adrian Heathfield

Head of Department Contact Details:

Joe Kelleher

¹ This will include trust exercises in the form of theatre games to build confidence and a playful atmosphere in the group, basic improvisation exercises on how to develop theatrical situations for the stage combining text and task oriented movement, and exercises in creative writing. None of the exercises demand any strenuous physical activities, over intimate situations or humiliating work.

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ETHICS COMMITTEE

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Project:

Theatre Ting – performance as a space for practicing ethics.

Brief Description of Research Project:

My research investigates the relational dynamics of performance, discussing proximity, trust, power, and responsibility in artistic collaborations and how these factors influence the relationship between performers and viewers in so called documentary works. I seek to experimenting with new vocabulary from ethical philosophy to re-frame artistic encounters with documentary material. Inquiring into how this material is practiced and performed, I will develop relationships with specific artists in the frame of three artistic collaborations. I will look at how ethics are played out in these practices focussing on relationality and the performance space as an arena for dialogue. This includes researching my own role as a dramaturge in contemporary performance making, and specifically in relation to documentary material. This process is an investigation into how my dramaturgical work informs, and re-frames these practices and aesthetics. My aim is to explore the relation between humans/ artist/ audiences and artistic material, understood as things, as a way to speak about ethics in performance practice.

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Consent Statement:

- I agree to take part in this research, and am aware that I am free to withdraw at any point. I understand that the artistic work I create in collaboration with the investigator, will become part of her research.
- I understand that I don't have any rights to the research results, but that I have fully shared ownership to the artistic result.

- I agree to the use and publication of images and live audio recordings of the artistic process and artistic result, as part of the submitted PhD thesis, published articles and as part of public lectures.
- No private information exchanged during rehearsal and presentation periods will be utilized as part of this research project, but my anonymity will not be maintained due to the relational nature of the research project.
- I agree to some rehearsals and professional conversations being audio recorded and/or photographed as part of this research project.
- I agree to the use of professional conversations and referencing of the artistic process, which I will have been part of, as being analyzed and reflected in the investigator's research. However, as participant I have the right to request the removal of direct quotations from conversations, and transcripts/ copies of relevant sections of the thesis will be made available if requested.

Name

Signature

Date

Please note: if you have a concern about any aspect of your participation or any other queries please raise this with the investigator. However, if you would like to contact an independent party please contact the Head of Department (or if the researcher is a student you can also contact the Director of Studies.)

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ETHICS COMMITTEE
INSTITUTIONAL CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Project:

Poetics of Ethics – negotiating relationships in performance practice. (working title)

Brief Description of Research Project:

My research investigates the relational dynamics of performance, discussing proximity, trust, power, and responsibility in artistic collaborations and how these factors influence the relationship between performers and viewers in contemporary works. I seek to reinvigorate the terms 'relation' and 'presence' in performance practice, experimenting with new vocabulary from ethical philosophy to re-frame artistic encounters. Inquiring into how ethics is practiced and performed, I will develop relationships with specific artists in the frame of three artistic collaborations. I will look at how ethics are played out in these practices focussing at my main concepts. This includes confronting my own ethical, emotional, artistic, and idealistic motives in an artistic collaboration. This process is an investigation into how my dramaturgical work informs, and re-frames these practices and aesthetics. My aim is to explore a language, or a poetics, for ethics in performance practice.

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Consent Statement:

- We are aware that the artistic work Camilla Eeg-Tverbakk is conducting with her collaborator(s) at our institution will become part of her research project.
- We grant permission for the research to take place at our institution.
- We have no legal obligations or responsibilities towards the researcher and her project outside regular conduct as part of the artistic project during the period we are offering rehearsal/performing space.
- We are aware that we don't have any rights to the research results.

Name of institution:

Artistic project.....

Period of rehearsal/ presentations.....

Name of representative.....

Signature

Date

Please note: if you have a concern about any aspect of your participation or any other queries please raise this with the investigator. However, if you would like to contact an independent party please contact the Head of Department (or if the researcher is a student you can also contact the Director of Studies.)

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Tjønn, A. (2014b) *Mandag oppsummering*, Email sent to Camilla Eeg-Tverbakk 17th February.

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